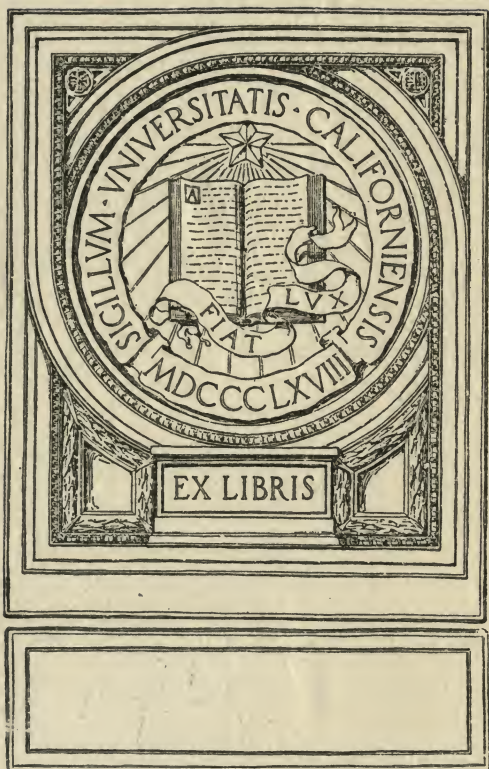


# Shipmates



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# SHIPMATES



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# SHIPMATES

BY

A. E. LOANE

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LONDON  
EDWARD ARNOLD

1912

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TO THE  
ATTENTION OF  
THE DIRECTOR  
OF THE  
BUREAU OF  
THE  
CENSUS

PORTRAITS FROM MEMORY OF NAVAL  
OFFICERS WHO WERE BORN BETWEEN  
1805 AND 1827 AND SERVED THEIR  
COUNTRY FOR MANY YEARS IN ALL  
QUARTERS OF THE GLOBE





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# SHIPMATES

## I. A MAN OF STRIFE

Ships and men—A quarrelsome messmate—Splendid isolation—  
A small command—Mutiny—A strict churchman—Matrimony  
—A sudden break—The slave-trade—Chronometers—Yellow-  
fever—A mistaken verdict

“**T**HE one great change that I observe in the navy,” said an old officer some thirty years ago, “is that ships are less alike and men more alike than they used to be. We were all tumbled in together, drunk and sober, coarse and fine, sane and otherwise, for years at a stretch, and we often fought from beginning to end of the commission; but I don’t think we were ever as dead-sick of one another as these youngsters are now in quarter the time. They’ve all been through the same mill and the handle was turned when they were just the same age, and their brains had been stuffed with exactly the same material. Every fellow used to have a history and a character of his own. Look at Byam and Heseltine and Franks and Blissett and Langley and Shaw, some of the first men I served with. Just after Langley’s

youngest son took five first-class certificates his daughter said to me: 'It's all very well, but when he's dead he'll be dead. When father's dead he'll be extinct.' They were all a bit toned down before *you* can remember, but can't you see the difference?"

I knew all the old shipmates to whom the speaker referred, and could indeed "see the difference."

At the present day Benjamin Byam would be called insane, but among almost equally unconventional men he passed for eccentric or, at worst, "queer tempered." It was on record that when at the end of one commission a captain of high social rank did violence to his conscience, and expressed the conventional hope that he would again have the pleasure of counting him among his officers, Byam replied that three years was quite long enough for the same people to be shut up together. His messmates shirked all forms of farewell, and fervently prayed that they might never serve with him again, but when face to face with this affliction only one man rebelled, and his determined protest ultimately brought a good billet and a large salary to Byam.

For more than half a year only the youngest member of the mess had been on speaking terms with him; except when on duty every communication had to be passed through this medium. The sole ground for the much ramified quarrel

was this : One stifling night when all the cabin doors were open and all the lights lowered, an Irish lieutenant said to Byam in jest, " I believe you like mixing your grog in the dark so that you can't see how much you take." He blazed up into furious anger, and swore that he would never speak to the man again. The captain overheard this, and very unwisely took him to task. Byam, in what he subsequently described in every quarter of the globe as " a perfectly, respectful manner " replied : " With all due deference to you, sir, I beg leave to point out that if you search the Regulations from beginning to end you will find none that compels me to open my lips except when on duty. I regard the ward-room as a floating stage-coach. If I like the passengers I shall speak to them, but not otherwise." The captain somewhat heatedly said that his conduct was un-Christian, and that he could never sit down to table with him again. Long before Wednesday arrived the captain repented, and somewhat pathetically told the senior officer of the mess that his weekly dinner with them was " the one pleasure of his life," and that he trusted he should receive the usual invitation. Byam professed to be ill, and remained in his cabin.

The captain was a genial, sociable, indiscreet man, on whom the isolation of his position bore with cruel force. The life must always be hard for a man of his type, but at the present day its



loneliness is perceptibly modified by the frequency of home mails, the long runs that it is thought permissible to make for the sole purpose of picking them up, and the fact that ships, and consequently their commanding officers, are in much more frequent communication than was formerly the custom.

Every Sunday morning at 11.30 he liked to "take his bearings" with a bottle of champagne; but he had no pleasure in drinking alone, and was often hard put to it to find a pretext for inviting one of the officers. When invention failed he consulted the calendar. Even there he must sometimes have drawn a blank, for on one occasion the message delivered to the second-lieutenant with unsmiling stolidity was: "The captain's compliments, sir, and it is the thirteenth Sunday after Trinity, and he would be pleased to see you at half-past eleven."

Most grievous of all the man's burdens was the unwritten law that he must never mention wife or child to his subordinates. One Christmas Day his only guest was the captain of a French man-of-war. Neither of them knew more of the other's language than a few phrases learnt by rote, which had no special applicability to the occasion, and a miscellaneous vocabulary of about a hundred queerly mispronounced words. Nevertheless they talked of their families and their private affairs for five hours without ceasing, and parted with



regret. The younger men were hugely amused by the fragments of conversation that reached their ears, but the older ones understood, and were silent.

Naturally the presence of a shipmate like Byam was peculiarly disagreeable to him, and at the end of a few months he easily persuaded himself that they "had all had their fair share," and got him appointed to a bigger ship; the commander of which promptly went to his captain and put in an application for permission to return to England at once on urgent private business, adding the oral explanation: "I'd go to gaol sooner than serve with him again. If you over-persuade me, it is quite on the cards that I shall do both." The captain, loth to admit such a firebrand among a singularly well-matched set of officers, ordered his boat and made a pressing appeal to the admiral; and Byam, to the envy of the rest of the fleet, was given a small command, and Shaw, unjustly deprived of it, had to take his place. He was indignant and mortified at the time, but found lifelong consolation in the indirect acknowledgment that "there were worse shipmates than himself." He also delighted to describe a ship, "I can't say I ever went aboard her, where things were hotter still. *None* of the men spoke to one another except on duty or in the presence of outsiders. When fellows called on the ward-room they were introduced all round, and a little stilted

conversation was kept up. It was just like husbands and wives when they have quarrelled so desperately that they don't wish people to know it. It was supposed to come from nerves : the captain was an ambitious man, and they were all over-worked."

The standard of sanity applied to commanding officers was if possible lower than the standard of sobriety that they themselves applied to any useful junior, but Byam could not meet it. He danced about from stem to stern like the proverbial dried pea on a gridiron. In more nautical phrase, he was "all on gimbals" :

"He boarded the king's ship; now on the beak,  
Now in the waist, the deck, in every cabin,  
He flam'd amazement."

There were men in those days who firmly maintained that a disagreeable captain made a comfortable ship : a common enemy bound all the officers together and gave them fellow-feeling with the crew. Either the principle is unsound or Byam overdid the part. The officers, ceaselessly worried themselves, continually harried their immediate subordinates, and these "took it out of" the men.

Mutiny resulted ; abortive as it usually was when marlinespikes had to meet muskets. A hitherto unknown theory was started that mutiny was a serious discredit to the captain of a ship,

but it was too new and untried to be pushed to inconvenient extremes. Byam was consoled with a valuable semi-civil appointment, adopted semi-civil manners, and retained it until he was seventy years of age. "Well"—as the commander who had rebelled against serving a second commission with him remarked with the clear-sightedness resulting from the plain living and anxious thinking enforced by the possession of six children and an income of a pound a day—"well, there's such a thing as getting your deserts, and there's getting things by interest, but one of the cheapest and surest ways of getting what you think yourself entitled to is to make yourself confoundedly disagreeable if you don't have it."

"Byam got a lot of profit out of cantankerousness," one of his old messmates told me, "besides all the pleasure. He not only enjoyed it at the time, but for twenty or thirty years after he enjoyed relating what he had said and done, justifying it and glorying in it. And then, as if that weren't enough, in the end he enjoyed repenting it."

I only knew Byam in his comparatively mild old age, when he spent much on foreign missions and insisted on conducting family prayers at great length and at strangely inconvenient hours. Like Petruchio he held that, "It shall be what o'clock I say it is."

In these latter years he was a strict churchman, but entirely after his own fashion. He utterly

declined to know any clergyman whose church he attended ; and if, unaware of this peculiarity, the incumbent called on him or in any way secured an introduction, he at once took a sitting in another parish. For a period of several months he felt obliged to attend a Wesleyan chapel, every clergyman within walking distance having sinned against this unwritten code.

The natural result of pasturing in so many fields was that his attention was drawn to a lack of uniformity "entirely brought about by the weak-kneed conduct of the bishops." He himself would not tolerate the smallest variation, and left a church that he had attended for five years, "unmolested by the incumbent," because the new hymn-books, though otherwise unchanged, were marked Hymnal. To have hymn-books at all was "merely a concession to the lower deck." He preferred the metrical version of the Psalms at the end of the Georgian prayer-book that he had carried all over the world. He possessed another, printed in the early part of the seventeenth century. As a child I was slightly confused by the prayers for Queen Anne, and asked who she was. He could not tell me, but when I afterwards recollected Anne of Denmark he seemed much pleased, and appeared to regard her existence as the kind of fact people learn "by putting in a great deal of time at the British Museum."

Shortly before he died Byam was reading prayers



at three o'clock in the afternoon. The doctor arrived—his second visit that day—and he thought the patient in such a weak state that it would probably be necessary to pay a third. He knocked and rang, and rang again, but the servants assembled in their master's room dared not take any notice. At last, somewhat alarmed, the doctor walked in unannounced. The old man turned on him in blind fury: "Sir, how dare you intrude on me when I am holding communion with my Maker? It is not the action of a gentleman. Send in your account instanter, and never dare to enter my presence again."

The night Byam died, his son, a stout major of marines, sat up with him. Towards morning he felt hungry and exhausted, and, thinking that his father was sleeping, helped himself to some of the fruit left by his bedside. He dropped the bunch like a pilfering schoolboy when the old man suddenly rapped his stick on the floor and shouted angrily: "No, you don't, sir! No, you don't. Those grapes are *mine*."

When Byam proposed to his wife he told her that he was considered the most disagreeable man in the service, but unluckily she did not believe him until afterwards. The marriage ceremony must have been one of the shortest on record, for Shaw solemnly assured me that "he took a working-party ashore at eight, and he came aboard to lunch at twelve a married man."

“It wasn’t altogether his temper that made them unhappy,” Langley told me; “it was that they had so little in common. Byam was a clever man in his way, and read all his life. She was not merely ill-educated. Most women—and men—are that; but if you have had any kind of an education you have some idea of your bearings, and you can ship what you most want as you go along. She was almost illiterate. When Byam died, Shaw had to manage all her affairs for her. The Blue Marine was such a chowder-head, and the Red Marine was out of England, and the Naval Instructor was out of favour at the time the will was made, and the daughter was dead. Besides, people always find some pretext for making use of Shaw. Mrs. Byam could just manage to sign her name while he kept his finger on the right spot; to pencil a document and send it by post was utterly useless. I don’t think she could do simple addition on paper, but Shaw said she was awfully keen about money matters, and could work out long calculations in her head. It distracted him if she insisted on comparing notes in the middle, but their results always tallied.

“She was only seventeen when they married, but even then there was too much leeway to be easily made up. A married woman can’t very well sit down and learn spelling, and the Blue Marine and his brothers arrived with quite unnecessary despatch. She was naturally clever,



and when Byam confounded her ignorance with stupidity she felt that she was unjustly treated. A stupid woman wouldn't have cared, and a naturally studious one would have come up to time before she was five-and-twenty."

Byam's house was in a narrow street, built when something was known of comfort—for the principal inmates—but nothing of hygiene. The rooms were large, and the furniture simple and arranged with strict precision; fifty times a day Byam dressed the ranks of the chairs. The windows were never opened, and the passages and stairs were dark and narrow. Towards the end of his life drainage became a vexed question, and he had an embarrassing habit of asking his old mess-mates: "Have you ever smelt anything wrong with the drains?" The question was once put to Langley in Shaw's presence, and when afterwards taunted with the promptness with which he replied, "No, never; nothing at all," he defended himself by the quibble, "How could I smell them? There *aren't* any."

The walls were covered with chilly engravings, possibly of value, certainly of a most depressing nature. Heseltine had supplied two of his earliest water-colours, but as one represented vicious-looking rocks under a lurid sky, and the other a ship with bare poles in a furious storm and canted over at such an angle that recovery seemed impossible, they did not add largely to the gaiety

of the domestic hearth. The books were nearly all bound in liquorice-brown, worn to a lighter shade at the corners, and although the pages were stained and worm-eaten, many of the leaves were still uncut. There were a few grim curios, chiefly Chinese, and a supremely hideous pair of vases for which the British Museum was supposed to sigh in vain. They had been presented by some Chinese statesman, who had also sent a large quantity of tea which he considered as valuable as the choicest wine. Byam tasted the tea, called it undrinkable trash and gave it to his native servant, who caused international difficulties by attempting to sell it and being arrested as a thief.

Byam was extremely kind and hospitable to his messmates' children, but iced pound cake was rather a doubtful joy when eaten under his eye; one knew that before the hall door was well closed a servant was summoned to sweep up the crumbs. As far as boys were concerned he did not think it necessary to wait; he rang the bell, and when Hannah appeared, leaving the dust-pan and brush in the hall (too prudent to mount the long flight of stairs without them, and too well-trained to anticipate an order), he made a vague but impressive gesture and said, "That—er—debris distresses me."

Like nearly all his messmates he was invariably courteous to servants, but rarely gave a direct order; possibly he feared apoplexy if it had been

disobeyed. The usual forms delivered in the most detached manner were: "I think I should like so and so;" "Perhaps it would be better if you did this or that"—but somehow these phrases were taken as stringent orders. He paid good wages and raised them when he thought fit, but a servant who asked to be "highed" was dismissed: "the request was equivalent to an accusation of robbery." Hours of work were reasonable, but to ask for a holiday was unpardonable. "If any servant demands a holiday," he said icily, "I give them a *long* one."

Byam was not wholly incapable of friendship. He had a schoolfellow who had joined the navy at the same time as himself. They had never served together, but had frequently met to compare grievances, and when they retired they lived close to one another and used to take a constitutional together every morning. One day they parted on the usual terms, but when the friend overtook Byam the next morning he observed that his salutation was not returned. He attributed the omission to absent-mindedness, and walked by his side speaking of some matter which interested them equally. No reply was made. They reached cross-roads and he asked: "Which way are you going, Ben?" Byam looked him full in the face and said in his bitterest tones: "I am going that way—and you can go to the devil." They never spoke to one another again. Byam may

have known why, but his friend most certainly did not.

There is something tragic in the childishly sudden cessation of many old friendships. In one case an admiral and a captain had been friends all through their service-life, and after they retired they settled in the same town and went abroad together every spring. Crossing the channel one wet cold day the admiral first opened a port-hole and then closed it, repeating the manœuvre until the captain in a fit of nervous irritation said, " Hang it all, Joe, a window must be either open or shut." (The use of Christian names was much more common among sailors in the old days than it is now.) " Don't be a fool," retorted the admiral testily. When they arrived at their journey's end they put up at different hotels, and henceforth passed one another in the street with the briefest of greetings.

Byam had spent several years on the West Coast of Africa, and with sardonic humour used to relate how on his return from a successful expedition carried out by four boats under his command, the captain rushed to the gangway to meet him, and without a thought of possible dead or wounded gasped out, " How many ? " " And when I said, ' Five hundred odd,' he *hugged me in his arms*. It was nineteen weeks since we had exchanged an unnecessary word.

" It used to be said that prize-money was put



on a coarse grating and well shaken. What fell through went to the captain and admiral, anything that stuck in the crevices was for officers and men. As for the ships we destroyed by accident, or because we could not spare enough men to handle them, they were always measured over the mast-head.

“But he hugged me a bit too soon. The ship was so abominably overcrowded that we had to take three hundred of the slaves aboard our own craft. That evening I was keeping the second dog-watch. The slaver-captain, a very gentlemanly fellow, was walking up and down with me, and everyone else was at dinner. Suddenly there was a sort of boiling over—I can’t describe it in any other way. The slaver-captain shrieked, ‘Shoot ’em down, shoot ’em down like dogs, or you’re done for.’ The marines came tumbling up headlong with loaded muskets, and when the fight was over only ninety-seven slaves could be found. We counted the cartridges, and not more than twenty can have been shot. The rest must have thrown themselves overboard unhurt. The slaver-captain’s cook was at the bottom of it. He knew their language, and told them we were cannibals and that their only chance was to try and seize the ship.

“You couldn’t do anything to slaver-captains except strip them of everything they had and land them. This man had a magnificent chronometer,

and it was given to me. I sold it : it was better that it should go where its history was unknown.

“ In those days heaps of merchant vessels had to sail without any chronometer at all. Ships of all nationalities used to hail one another as they passed and shout, ‘ What’s your longitude ? ’ If they had nothing to depend on but themselves they got into the latitude and ran down the longitude, and if they weren’t more than thirty miles out in their reckoning they thought they had done well. Even to our own small craft only one chronometer was supplied, and you really want three. I get very restless nights, but the one service-dream that I ever have is that the chronometers are running down and there is a sentry over them and I can’t get past him.

“ But I once had a far worse experience than that slaver business. We were 2000 miles from port and yellow-fever broke out. We lost 80 men out of 230, and for over three weeks the captain and myself were the only persons left who could command a watch or take an observation.

“ The sail-maker and one boy sewed up the bodies: I insisted on all the ordinary forms being gone through. At last the boy came to me and protested, but I wouldn’t listen to him. I said, ‘ When your turn comes do you wish to be pitched over the side without decent burial ? ’ The other day I saw a boy with just such a head of hair, and I thought what a brutal thing it was to say. But



it never struck me at the time ; I didn't realise how young he was and that it was too ghastly a piece of work for him even if there had been no danger."

After he retired he read practically the whole of the *Times* every day, beginning immediately after an eight-o'clock breakfast and sending the paper the same evening to a man who could not afford to take it in. Almost the last book that he read was the *Origin of Species*, and he was exceedingly impatient with any weak-minded brother who could not instantly reconcile its teaching with that of Holy Writ. " If it pleased the Almighty to make my ancestors monkeys, w-w-what does that matter to me ? "

The great tragedy of his life was one that he never mentioned, and which had almost passed from the remembrance of his shipmates. He had a half-brother more than twenty years younger than himself, and he was strongly attached to him. He entered the paymaster line, and when he was about twenty-five he was assistant-paymaster in charge on board a small vessel, and the captain was an utter scoundrel, though no one knew it at the time. He borrowed large sums from young Byam, and either he had not the moral courage to insist on having proper receipts or else they were spirited away. He was suddenly called on to hand in his accounts, and was nearly £200 short. The captain denied on oath that he

had ever borrowed a farthing, and the young fellow was dismissed the service with disgrace. If Byam had actually seen him no doubt he would have been able to persuade him of the truth of his story, but the court-martial took place on the other side of the world ; he only knew the verdict and a very brief abstract of the evidence. He was a scrupulously honourable man, and his brother had been his one soft spot, more to him than his sons ever were, and the disgrace half killed him. He sent him £50, and said he never wished to hear his name again.

Young Byam was a good enough fellow to have stood all the ordinary trials of life, but he hadn't strength for a thing like that. It broke his spirit, and a few years later he died literally a beggar. But what really broke Byam up and seemed to alter his nature as far as it could be altered was that long after, when everyone but himself had practically forgotten his brother, the captain was tried by court-martial for some terribly shady piece of work and cashiered. Then poor Byam knew that his brother had been wronged, and perhaps more wronged by himself than by the rest of the world.

## II. ADVISER IN GENERAL

A service quarrel—The complete letter-writer—Philosophy of sex—Prisoner's friend—A prodigious memory—A prudent father—On the West Coast—Medical aid—A radical change—A fixed proportion—Natural history—Shipwreck—The rigour of the game—The question of age

**R**ICHARD SHAW, commonly called Sure-of-It, was about fifteen years younger than Byam, and their acquaintance dated from the time when he was a boy of twelve and Mrs. Byam was a bride of seventeen. His youthful admiration for her turned to chivalrous service as the years went on, and he was one of the very few persons who contrived always to remain on speaking terms with her husband.

He was a hard-headed Puritan, who never drank or swore or neglected his duty, and who possessed a sense of humour mainly exercised in "taking it out of" his superior officers in the most exasperatingly correct fashion. When quite a young man he was given command of a small ship. Going out of harbour he met another ship coming in; if she had flown a certain pennant it would have been his duty to make way for her, but as she did not he held on his course. Rather too late he

perceived that she intended to do the same, and the two ships grazed one another, doing some trifling damage to the larger vessel. He at once went on board to explain the matter and express his regret. The captain, "in the presence of two of his officers, of a person in the dress of a civilian, and of his private servant," shouted furiously: "I call it a d—d lubberly piece of work." Shaw begged leave to differ. The expression was repeated. He made a formal salute and left the ship. Twenty-four hours later the captain met him ashore, and coming up to him with hollow geniality, said: "I have thought no more of that little affair yesterday." Incensed that the man should publicly insult him and then offer a perfunctory apology in private, Shaw replied with hauteur: "I *have* thought of it, sir, and I must request you to forward a communication to the admiral."

When the admiral read it he sent for the captain, and advised him to write a letter expressing regret for the words used and the circumstances in which they were uttered. The captain hotly refused. "Agree with thine adversary quickly," said the admiral. "I warn you that there is too much against you already. If you attempt to fight this you will bring such a hornets' nest about your ears that you will never be able to stand against it. It would hardly be a serious matter to any other man, but it is more than your reputation will bear. It is the last straw."



With regard to the discipline of the lower deck, Shaw acknowledged but one rule: "Whatever you do to a bluejacket, never interfere with his meals." It sounds simple, but as a young man it carried him through several mutinies without a scratch, though marlinespikes fell thick as hail within a few feet of him.

He had a strong hold on his messmates, chiefly won by cultivated commonsense and an elementary knowledge of business matters rare among sailors in those days. He was not a favourite with men's wives and daughters, in fact he often complained that he was "only invited to funerals," but occasionally widows and orphans learnt how much they owed to the check placed on the investments of their simple-minded relatives by his oft-repeated maxim, "Better take four per cent. and all Night in." It is true that his conceptions of the functions of money were of the most childlike nature. In later life he often said: "They talk very glibly of millions and hundreds of millions, but if everyone were to call his money in I'd like to know where they'd find it!"

Shaw drew up wills, and promised to prove them without the help of a lawyer; he composed letters asking for good-service pensions, extra allowances, or coveted appointments, saw that they were copied on the right paper with a three-eighths margin, and revised the spelling with almost imperceptible touches of a quill-pen which performed



marvels in his hand and spread ink and desperation in his messmates'. "Why on earth don't you use a dictionary?" he asked one specially helpless client. "My dear fellow, what earthly use is a dictionary unless you know the first three letters of the word you want?"

One reason for the high percentage of successful applications was that he sternly discountenanced the common phrase, "There's no harm in asking." "I don't ask you to stop and think whether you deserve it: matters of this kind are not based on considerations of merit. But I *do* ask you not to waste powder by asking for a thing until you are quite sure that it is in a man's power to give it to you. Ask him for what he has, and if he sees fit to refuse he feels that he has done you an injury, that he owes you a good turn, and later on he is very likely to give you something a long sight better just to get you off his mind. Ask him for what he can't give you and you humiliate him, and unless he's a most exceedingly amiable fellow he'll bear you a grudge as long as he lives."

Shaw kept his head at all times. "Never cry when you lose, never crow when you win," was his favourite motto. One day a man for whom he had written what he called a "strong" letter brought him the reply with a face of silent reproach. "Hah!" said Shaw cheerfully, as he skimmed it over, "their Lordships have refused you, and they've done it in a confoundedly nasty way. In

all my experience I don't think I've ever known 'em go outside the usual forms." "I shall be a marked man," groaned his messmate. "My dear fellow, do exercise a little common sense. They're uncivil because they know they're in the wrong. You can hardly expect them to say so. Just hold on quietly for a few months and you'll get it." And he did.

On one occasion an old shipmate, the commanding officer of a small craft which had most recklessly got into difficulties with Chinese pirates and lost several men, brought him the account of the affair that he had prepared for the admiral and asked proudly: "What d'you think of it, eh?" "Think of it! Think of it!" spluttered Shaw; "why, if the admiral sends that report home you'll have to follow it at your own expense, and you'll be precious lucky if you find yourself shelved on the lowest rate of half-pay. Why, it would dish you if your name were Beauchamp instead of Brown without even an *e*. Where's my pen? I'll make you a rough draft on the back of this." He did so, and in due time Brown received a letter of thanks from the Admiralty, and at the end of the commission was promoted over the heads of fifty just men.

Shaw even edited proposals of marriage, and decided if and when they should be renewed. He shared Mr. Collins' views as to the practice of elegant females. If the lover had cooled down

before the refusal was received he said: "You're well out of it, old boy." If feelings were at the same, or even a higher temperature, he said with welcome positiveness: "She only means, Ask me again," and drafted a fresh letter.

Shaw's opinions on the whole question of sex had the merit of simplicity and steadfastness, and supplied a good, bold, working hypothesis by which to direct his shipmates' course though not his own. "Most men are rogues, most women are fools. When a man's a fool he's more foolish than any woman on earth, and if a woman has brains she is a more cunning rogue than any man unhung. A man who marries a woman cleverer than himself is a fool." This would seem to be implied by the previous statements, but he regarded it as a distinct theorem needing separate proof. He married the most intellectual woman he ever met. Like the half-legendary Scottish king he would handle the books that she read, muttering, "Good Lord, what's it all about? It's High Dutch coiled against the sun as far as I'm concerned," and then kiss the name on the fly-leaf before he laid it down. To the day of his death he thought his wife faultless, except for a vexatious excess of what he held to be characteristic feminine virtues—selflessness and generosity in money matters.

Although in so many ways an active-minded man, Shaw possessed to a marked degree a gift common among his contemporaries, the power of almost

entirely suspending thought and remaining for hours in a quiescent state without suffering from boredom. In bad weather or in crowded waters he had the habit of sitting in his cabin in the dark, so that if he were called on deck at any moment his sight would need no adjustment. After being on shore for a time this power deserted him, and to his annoyance and his friends' amusement he was compelled "to fill up part of his time" with occupations previously despised.

As a young man he prided himself on his whiskers, and although they were unquestionably beyond regulation length and width and depth, his pugnacity and his fluency as a letter-writer were so well known that even the veriest martinet did not venture on open remonstrance. One day when his ship was being inspected the admiral complained of the "hairy face" of one of the seamen. The captain thought his opportunity had come at last, and waving his hand in Shaw's direction said: "You see, sir, the example that is set before him." The admiral, however, had already far more clerical work than he liked; he gave a quick glance at Shaw, discovered a small clearing in the forest, and said conclusively: "It is entirely different; Mr. Shaw is shaved."

Every man's grievance was as dear to Shaw as his own, perhaps dearer—until it had been righted. As far as his own affairs were concerned his service conscience was almost as strict as his private, but



for distressed clients he stretched many a doubtful point. When a Rhadamanthine official refused to give an Irish surgeon any pay until he produced the detailed diary which it was his duty to keep, he shut himself up with the man in his cabin and, aided by a marvellous memory for other people's business and a fine instinct for probability, he filled up a log-book which easily passed muster.

Perhaps the keenest joy of Shaw's early service life was to appear at courts-martial as prisoner's friend, and from much practice he had acquired an attorney-like subtlety which often won the day in face of the clearest evidence. On one occasion a young lieutenant was charged with using insubordinate language while under the influence of drink. He was undoubtedly guilty, but his record was not such as commonly belongs to men who find themselves in this position; Shaw considered that he was being hardly dealt with, and was furiously his partisan.

On the evening before the dreaded day he visited the young fellow in his narrow cabin and found him drowned in tears. "It's all up with me," he gasped. "Captain Gaynor's a member of the court, and he's just been here and advised me to plead guilty."

In the excess of his unholy joy Shaw almost swore. "We've got him, my boy, got him hip and thigh. Take your all-night-in while you can get it. Mark my words, you'll keep the middle-watch



to-morrow. Pryor and Ellis are about sick of sharing your duty. No ; I won't tell you until the last moment. You're off your balance, and I can't trust to your discretion."

Next morning the lieutenant, prompted by Shaw, but too much dazed to realise of what use the form could be, objected to the presence of Captain Gaynor as a member of the Court. Asked for his reasons he was again primed, and replied : "He has prejudged the case. He came to my cabin last night and advised me to plead guilty."

Within eight hundred miles there was no other officer of sufficient rank and wholly unconnected with the case. The court-martial was indefinitely postponed, the prisoner returned to duty, and finally the charge was dropped.

It was a quarrelsome age in the navy, and the fact that admirals had the patronage of all vacancies caused by courts-martial, as well as invaliding and death vacancies, did not tend to the peaceful settlement of disputes which often had an incredibly trifling commencement. Shaw was far from conciliatory in manner, but he incessantly trotted out a phrase which checked a hundred times as many wrangles as he ever caused : "You can't argue about matters of fact. Settle your facts first on good authority. Steward, bring me my Gazetteer," or Navy List, or Peerage, or Dictionary. If the desired information was not enshrined in these

his only works of reference, he settled the matter "to the best of my recollection." There were few who dared dispute the accuracy of a man who knew the entire morning and evening service by heart, who could remember the second and third Christian names of messmates whom he had not met for twenty years, state with confidence their birth-place and parentage, and describe with verisimilitude the exact sentiments with which they had been received by their respective fathers-in-law.

One oft-repeated tale was of a half-pay captain who fell desperately in love with the only child of a very rich man. Finding that his feelings were warmly returned he called on her father, but without the faintest expectation of meeting with decent civility. The old man heard what he had to say, and then began to sum up the case: "You have no connexions, no interest, no hope of further employment afloat, and 'as a married man' no wish for it. What have you to offer my daughter?"

"My half-pay is seventeen shillings a day."

"And you have nothing more?"

"Nothing but £1800 that I saved."

"What out of?"

"My pay."

"Good Lord!" cried the man of wealth. Then he held out a detaining hand.

"You mayn't have much to give my daughter,

but at any rate you will know how to take care of what she has. If she's content, I am."

An early period of Shaw's life bulked large in recollection—eighteen months' slaver-catching on the West Coast of Africa.

"It was awful lying a few miles out, day after day, knowing what every other fellow would say before he'd even thought it. With nine in the mess there were never enough of us on speaking terms to play a rubber of whist, though sometimes it ran to three-handed cribbage. When we *did* get ashore we walked in opposite directions as hard as we could go. What temper there was we kept for service purposes.

"The food was atrocious. The day after we got out to Lagos the captain sent for us all and said: 'I've been talking to the doctor who has been out here before, and at my request he's going to give you a little advice.' So the combined sawbones and pill-compounder began. It was chiefly about what not to eat. We listened, and then went back to the ward-room and looked at one another pretty ruefully. 'Look here,' I said, 'if we eat we *may* die, and if we don't we *must* die. Eat whatever's going—and let 'em fight it out down below.' So we ate all we could get, and everyone of us lived to go home, even the doctor.

"He was quite insane. I had a touch of fever once, and he was mixing up some medicine for me. His place was just opposite my cabin, both doors

were open, and I had very long sight. Why until I was past fifty I could stand in the middle of Southsea common and read the time by St. Thomas's clock! 'What's that you're putting in?' I sung out. 'Only something to take the taste off,' he said, and handed the glass to my servant. 'Put it alongside me,' I said to the fellow; 'I don't want it just yet awhile.' While I was sniffing it and holding it up to the light, the captain came in to inquire for me. 'Good Lord!' he said, 'what a baby. Why don't you swallow it down and have done with it?' 'For the simple reason,' I said, 'that there is a full ounce of poison in it, and I don't even know the brand.' 'My dear fellow,' he said, 'pray recollect that the last time you had a touch of fever you accused your servant of stealing £800 *in silver* from under your pillow. He had to run for his life, and you were abusing the sentry for not poking a bayonet into him.'

"However, when I told him the stuff came from the third bottle on the second shelf, starboard side, and he found the lip of it was wet, and when I proved to him that as I lay in my bunk I could pick out every one of the poisons, he looked a little queer. 'What do you want me to do?' he asked. 'Lock 'em all up and lose the key.' So he did. We couldn't get any other doctor to say the man was mad. Dog won't eat dog."

Although two of Shaw's closest personal friends



were medical men, he was careful to explain that he liked them "as shipmates," and not in their professional capacity. He thought all doctors ignorant and daring, but naval doctors were "far and away the worst of the lot. If a man can't get a living in England he goes to India; if he isn't good enough for that he goes into the army; if they won't have him even there the navy has to take him." One of his favourite stories was of a bluejacket who fell out of his hammock at nine o'clock one evening and dislocated his shoulder. There were five doctors on the ship's books, two permanently and three as passengers, but it was sixteen hours before the unlucky man received any surgical attendance. Where were they all? One was drunk, two were ashore on leave, and one without it, and one couldn't be found.

Another tale was of his dining with the Commander-in-Chief in China and saying to him: "Medical treatment has changed to an extraordinary degree, sir. When I was out here twenty years ago doctors starved their patients, gave them purgatives strong enough for a cart-horse, bled them till they fainted, and salivated them till their teeth dropped out. Now it's effervescing drinks and chicken and champagne, and stuffing from morning till night and whenever a man opens his eyes. They even wake him up to feed him." "Just what I was telling a whole posse of them this morning." "And I suppose they said the



other men were all wrong and wisdom was born with them ? ” “ Not a bit of it ! They said that the British constitution had radically changed during the interval. Rather a colossal lie, but they're an example to us : they never give one another away.”

At heart Shaw admired one of his early captains who, “ after working the thing out carefully on paper,” decided that it was impossible to have more than five per cent. of the men on the sick-list “ without throwing everything out of gear.” One day the staff-surgeon reported that a certain man was ill. The captain shook his head. “ You have your five per cent. already.” “ But the man is most seriously ill, sir.” “ Can't help it. Five per cent. is the outside number that I can spare.” “ But, sir, if the man is kept another day on duty I cannot answer for his life.” “ Then all I can say is, that if he goes on the sick-list the man who is nearest well must come off. Five per cent. you have, and five per cent. is all you'll get while I command this ship.”

When ill his attitude was very much that of Dr. Johnson : “ Pr'y thee, don't tease me. Stay till I am well, and then you shall tell me how to cure myself.”

Man is born to boast, and sailors are no exception to the rule. One will swear that he has been in every naval hospital in every quarter of the globe, and in some of them twice over, while

another boasts that he has never been a day on the sick-list in his life, and risks that life in the interests of the boast. Men with their temperature at 105° F. have only consented to remain in their cabin on the understanding that their record is not to be spoilt by any formal recognition of the fact that they are not on duty. Shaw boasted that he had never seen the inner walls of a hospital although he had had every fever that it was possible to have, from small-pox and yellow fever downwards, the one exception being Malta fever, but that was the text for a further boast—"I never served in the Mediterranean and put water-colour drawings in my log-book and made myself a laughing-stock for foreigners by speaking French. Everyone should stick to his own language, and then you may know what you are talking about." He affected to despise shipmates who "had spent half their time in Malta," but later in life, when he found how many things were of interest to them and a dead-letter to him, he frankly owned that he was envious: "In my day the Mediterranean was the only chance a man had of being civilised, and I never but once passed the straits."

He had not a high opinion of the amount of intellect needed in the upper ranks of the service, and enjoyed relating the curious chances by which some men received most unsuitable appointments and the ease with which they retained them. In one case, "Two admirals applied for the same

billet. Their interest was about equal and the Admiralty did not wish to offend the supporters of either, so they gave it to a third man who had no interest at all and was supposed to have no brains. A friend said to him: 'There's been nothing but quarrelling on the station for the last three years. You'll never be able to keep peace among 'em all.' 'I don't intend to try,' he said. 'I have always maintained that *that* is the duty of the Commander-in-Chief's cook.' And his cook did it, too!"

Shaw loved facts, and if in apparent contradiction so much the better. Reconciling theories annoyed him desperately. Although of an eagerly helpful nature he was singularly incapable of teaching, and nothing seemed to him more wonderful than the power of communicating knowledge to others. One day he said to a naval instructor: "If I had been a schoolmaster I should have been dead long ago." "It's a trying life for any man. Still, with a chest like yours——" "But what on earth has my chest to do with it? I mean that I should have been hanged."

He often spoke of a shipmate some years older than himself who, after a brief childhood spent in an old seaport town, entered the navy, and served almost continuously for fifty-five years. One day he wished to pay a compliment to a lady and told her that she had a complexion like a rose. This effort though lacking in novelty was fairly

well received, and he added warmly : “ Yes, indeed, like a primrose ! ” It is doubtful whether Shaw himself could have given the names of a dozen flowers, and he certainly could not have applied half that number correctly. His ignorance of bird life was so complete that when a little girl said to him, “ This is my tame sparrow. I have had it for two years,” he exclaimed, “ Bless my soul, my dear, you don’t say so ! You surprise me. I thought the little beggars died off every winter like flies.”

As a child Shaw had absorbed narrowly Evangelical doctrines, and he was inwardly convinced that all worthy people ought to find life a vale of tears and bitterness, and he enjoyed his own almost unbroken good luck a little fearfully. Being slightly illogical he drew the further conclusion that misfortune was a sufficient proof of virtue, and was extremely sympathetic. Only one misfortune must never be mentioned in his hearing—shipwreck. There are sailors who claim a knowledge of their profession in strict proportion to the number of shipwrecks and “ narrow shaves ” they have experienced, but this pretension roused his wrath to the fiercest degree. “ If ever I’d been wrecked, at least I’d have the decency not to say so. For one ship that is lost by stress of weather, fifty are lost by bad seamanship. With all the ocean on one side, and an iron-bound coast on the other, they hug the shore. Now I’ll tell you



what I call caution. The man was an ignorant old fellow, but he understood a sailor's first duty—to take care of his ship. He was going up from Plymouth to Glasgow; ran into a thick fog, and lost his bearings altogether. He was afraid to go on; he couldn't anchor, and what d'you suppose he did? He said to himself: 'It must be safe to go over the course we've already crossed,' and he did. Then when the fog lifted he picked up his bearings and turned round once more. Of course I'm not speaking of the merchant service. I know many skippers have a double set of orders: one for the owners to produce if anything goes wrong, and one that they have to follow if they don't mean to get sacked." One conviction due to his early upbringing was that it is impious to complain of the weather, but he gave himself a dispensation when fog and thaw combined forces.

Like most sailors of his day, Shaw was a great card player. Whist, picquet, écarté, nothing came amiss to him, but he owned to a preference for cribbage, and especially treasured a board that had been present at the battle of Trafalgar.

"I never saw the game played until I was twenty-two. In fact I hardly knew one card from another. I was the youngest in the ward-room by a long chalk, and I joined in the middle of the commission, and the commander made me play with him every night because he always won and the others couldn't stand any more of it. He



was a Scotch earl, who couldn't afford to chuck the service when he succeeded to the title. He just explained the rules of the thing to me, and then from the very beginning we had what he called the rigour of the game. That meant all I omitted to count he took for himself, and if I tried to take too much he pegged the amount backward on my board and forward on his own. It was awfully trying to the temper, but one night after six weeks of it I beat him three games out of five, twice round the board. A fellow who was looking on said I had had a run of luck, and of course I let it pass, but the commander said: 'Not a bit of it; it was done by good play. Ten days ago he grasped the principle of the game, and the rest of you never could. Tell them what it is, Shaw.' Well, up to that moment I hadn't the ghost of an idea, but flattery sometimes gives a jog to your brain that nothing else will, and I answered as glibly as if he had held up the words in front of me: 'As long as the cards are properly shuffled the hands must run pretty even. It's pegging that does it.'

"Soon after that his affairs were arranged, and he went home. I think there was a thicker sprinkling of titled men in the navy then, but for the most part they were very poor. I knew two more of them who would have been precious glad to have a hundred a year besides their pay. To spend, I mean; nominally they had several

thousand. And just because so few men had money even those who might have had more were kept pretty short at sea. I remember two younger sons of a wealthy duke, and they were only given the regulation minimum allowance—fifty pounds.

“ I got into the navy by a bit of a side-wind, and I came up hand over hand, and some of the fellows didn’t altogether like it. But I looked older than I was and I kept a still tongue, and very soon they only knew my seniority and lost sight of my age.

“ It’s a thing most people are wonderfully dense about. I remember when I was barely twenty-seven a soldier was given a passage aboard us out to Hong-Kong. I rather liked the fellow, and he sat next me at dinner and spent a good deal of time with me on deck. When he landed he couldn’t find me, and he asked the captain to say good-bye for him, and added : ‘ Poor old chap, I hope he’ll get his promotion soon. It’s rather hard lines.’ The captain was surprised, and said : ‘ Up to the present he has been a lucky man. For what age do you take him ? ’ ‘ Oh, well, I suppose he can’t be far short of fifty ? ’ ”

All through his life the subject of age was of the deepest interest to Shaw ; he could not come into the most casual contact with anyone without asking himself and other people, How old is he ? Uncertainty was vexatious, inaccuracy was

intolerable. One day Langley's wife lamented in his hearing that she and her nine brothers and sisters were all a little doubtful as to their precise age as they had been christened "in batches," and could therefore derive but little information from their baptismal certificates. Shaw condoled sincerely with her most insincere regrets. She belonged to an old naval family, and after turning the matter over in his mind for some hours he decided the age of every member of it for three generations, and drew up a document which filled two sheets of foolscap, marking those dates which were "ascertained" with a star, and those which were "approximate" with a cross. Fortunately he had a deep-rooted dislike to spending money on postage, dating from the time "when it used to cost me twenty-two pence to send a letter from Lisbon to Portsmouth, and the Portuguese pocketed almost the whole of it," and he handed the missive over to Langley and asked him to give it to his wife the next time he went ashore. Langley choked down his laughter and undertook the commission, but did not fulfil it until he had made a few judicious alterations in the dates, muttering to himself: "And the man has the cheek to call *me* the most foolhardy fellow he ever met!"

Some weeks later Shaw was gratified to learn, at third or fourth hand, that Mrs. Langley "really

could not understand why people called him such a disagreeable man," and he replied with great cordiality that, although she might have her foibles, in some ways she was one of the most sensible women he had ever met.

### III. "SALT-WATER AND FRESH"

Impersonation—A Spartan husband—Midshipman's half-pay—  
The duties of an expert—The Bishop of Marines—Religious  
instruction—The origin of civilisation—Langley's remains

**L**ANGLEY was the son of a country clergyman, and he most certainly bore out a common statement with regard to their lack of discipline. His chief weapon was sarcasm, and he made so many enemies that, in spite of brilliant professional abilities and good opportunities of displaying them, promotion was exceedingly slow, and appointments were hard to obtain and difficult to keep.

He was a small man, with a hooked nose and dark, unsailorlike, short-sighted eyes; in fact he so strongly resembled the pictures of Wellington on blacking-bottles that he declared any further portraiture to be sheer waste of money, and the only photograph his wife possessed was taken very late in life by a former messmate, who soon afterwards abandoned the art "because it was reducing the list of his friends too rapidly." He had a thin, penetrating voice, and spoke with a deliberation which seemed to tip all his arrows



with flint. His messmates agreed that "there was no venom in him," but his commanding officers usually held a different opinion.

One day Langley heard a lieutenant complaining in somewhat insubordinate terms that for three weeks in succession he had had to keep watch and watch and could hardly hold his eyes open at noon, and told him drily and with apparent conviction: "The knowledge that you have the honour to hold a commission in her Majesty's service ought to be sufficient, sir, to keep you awake day and night continuously until further orders." Both speeches reached the captain's ears, and not unnaturally he thought Langley's was far more subversive of discipline.

The imprudence of Langley's words was over-matched by some of his acts. One trick that he played was so mad that even he never dared speak of it until long after he retired. A very young captain about his own height, and bearing enough resemblance to him to answer to any passport-description, was appointed to a ship and ordered to take up his command by a certain date. For reasons altogether too unreasonable to be laid before the admiral he did not wish to join until thirty-six hours later, and after a hasty examination of the list of officers on board his vessel asked Langley to personate him. Langley readily agreed, took most of the baggage, set out on his seventy-miles' journey by coach and rail, and

reached the ship after nightfall. By the dim light of oil-lamps he knew that he had little to fear, and soon turned in and slept peacefully all night. He awoke to the realisation that although it was winter there were ten hours of daylight to be faced, and that however familiar he might be with the usual routine of a captain when joining his ship, he could neither show himself on deck nor put his signature to any papers. The time-honoured ruse of “ shamming sick ” was not open to him ; there was a doctor on board, and to refuse to see him would be an act of grave discourtesy. It was true that the doctor could not prove that he was not Captain Kennedy, but, when he afterwards saw that officer, for whom could he take him ? He adopted a middle course : said he felt tired and chilly, put on a travelling-cap and a monkey-jacket (uniform greatcoats were then unknown), and crouched over a closed stove.

No one but the first lieutenant entered the cabin ; but before noon he could see plainly that the man’s suspicions were aroused, and that the questions laid before him were mere pretexts for an interview. At last Langley carried the war into the enemy’s country, turned on him in a rage and asked : “ How dare you disturb me in this frivolous manner ? If you don’t understand the ordinary routine of a ship in harbour you had better ask to be relieved.” The lieutenant left the cabin, but two hours later returned, with no affectation

of asking for orders, and, looking him straight in the face, asked point-blank, "Sir, are you Captain Kennedy?" "Get out of my cabin, sir!" The young man stood his ground: "I ask you, sir, are you Captain Kennedy, the recently appointed captain of this ship?"

Springing to his feet and swearing violently (not a practice of his own, but a well-known habit of the man he was impersonating) and shouting, "Get out of my cabin, sir, or I'll put you under arrest!" Langley bore down on him, and without actually touching him compelled him to back out of the open door, which he immediately slammed and fastened.

An hour or so later the happy idea struck Langley that, having carried out the admiral's orders by joining the ship on the previous day, there was nothing to prevent him from going back to the junction to meet Kennedy, who was due there at midnight and had promised faithfully to be aboard soon after breakfast, and this plan would obviate all difficulties as to the disappearance of the superfluous captain.

He changed into plain clothes, and sent for the first lieutenant and announced his intention of going ashore for the night. The lieutenant, suffering strong reaction from his previous boldness, received his parting orders with perfect meekness.

Langley would have left by the next train had not Kennedy most unexpectedly alighted from it.

His nerve had begun to fail at two o'clock that morning when it suddenly struck him that he was risking another man's commission as well as his own. Finding that he would not be expected on board that night they turned into an hotel to laugh and dine. Curiously enough, although they both lived to be very old they never met again.

Langley was fond of ladies' society, but fiercely resented their presence on board ship. "It isn't a fit place for any woman, and it spoils her clothes. The cleaner a ship is, the dirtier it is. We clean with grease and rags, not soap and water." He professed to honour above all men a certain captain whose wife went aboard to see him, entirely against his wish, when the ship was riding at anchor about three miles from the shore. "Dirty weather" suddenly set in, and he most reluctantly agreed that she should spend the night aboard. He had scarcely done so when orders were received to set sail immediately, and he called for his wife's boat. It was impossible to let down the companion-ladder, and as soon as the boat had been lowered the lady was slung over the side in a chair. Just at the critical moment a wave dashed the boat away from the ship's side, and the chair was dipped well down in the water. Every man expected the order that the boat was to wait until a few dry wraps could be found, but the captain merely swore at the boat's crew for



being land-lubbers and had the chair lowered again. Drenched through, and in a piercing wind, the unlucky woman was rowed ashore. When the captain returned a fortnight later from his flying cruise—no letters having been received in the meantime—he learnt that his wife had been five days in her grave.

One of Langley's cherished recollections was of a most profitable stay in Scotland :

"I was six or seven and twenty, but still a mate. I had been stranded for several months, and had no hope of employment and no half-pay. None was given to junior officers. Why, a mess-mate of mine was a married man and had a couple of children. He was ashore for more than two years, and they were nearly starving. At last he went to their Lordships and complained that he had been passed over. They said: 'We are here to find officers for ships, not ships for officers.' 'However that may be,' he said, 'I can't hold out another week. If you can't give me an appointment we must all go to the workhouse on Saturday.' They didn't want a scandal of that kind, so they found him a billet.

"I wasn't married, and my father gave me house-room and the run of my teeth, but even that was more than he could afford, and I hated turning up at meal-times, and I hated loafing round the village all day, though I was fond enough of the place in an ordinary way.



“ I’ll tell you a thing that shows how times are changed. One Saturday evening I went to tea with some old friends in the village, and we were having a round game. About nine o’clock my mother sent a message by the maid : ‘ Would Mr. Willy please return at once as the water was heated for his bath.’ No one seemed to think it queer.

“ Well, by some side-wind I got an offer to go to Scotland as an expert. I knew about as much of the matter as you do, perhaps less, but that was their look-out, not mine. You can’t be buyer and seller too. When I met the agent he asked me what terms I expected. I hummed and hawed and said that in the navy our pay might be small but it was certain, and so forth. At last he got impatient, and said very brusquely : ‘ I may as well tell you at once that three guineas a day is our outside limit.’ Three guineas a day, when I had never had more than five shillings in my life, and all the pocket-money I had had in sixteen weeks had been a sovereign that my good old aunt gave me ! I said to myself like a Chinaman, ‘ Keep your countenance, Johnny,’ and told him that, as I was not likely to be wanted afloat just yet awhile, I thought I might as well go. I borrowed five pounds to get across the border, and came back with a hundred, a thing not many men can boast of if report says true ! What did I do to earn it ? The only thing I can remember

doing is standing on a bridge and noting down the number of vessels that passed within a given time."

The h—less chaplain who had been such an affliction to Heseltine once served under Langley, who found him a heavy trial, though for other reasons.

"He was the best little fellow in the world, though he did say nothink and anythink, and never shook hands with anyone without hoping they were 'pretty-well-to-day.' Don't know where he came from, but I fancy from some all-sorts-shop up north. He got converted somehow, and thought he had a mission to convert other people. He scraped together the quaintest set of testimonials imaginable and went to the bishop and begged and prayed to be ordained. The bishop refused him time after time, but he stuck to it like the widow in the Gospel (I once heard him speak of her as 'the important widow'), and at last for peace' sake the poor old man said that if he'd go to a theological college for a year he'd give in.

"Well, it seemed that as a curate no one wanted him, and he was pretty well on his beam`ends. In a lucky moment he heard of the navy, apparently for the first time. Chaplains weren't obliged to be double-barrelled in those days, and they were at a premium just then; and he found himself received with open arms, and four times the screw he'd ever had before, no rent to pay,

and four meals a day for a sum that any landlady in the kingdom would have scoffed at. I must say he was openly thankful and did his best to earn it. He used to begin his sermon the first thing Monday morning, and hammered away at it till the last thing Saturday night. The first half of the week he was lengthening it, and the second half shortening it, for he never found a captain who expected the men to stand more than forty-five minutes. After that it was quite understood that to shuffle your shoes on the deck was no breach of discipline. He complained to me once, but I said: ‘Put yourself in their place. They don’t understand ten consecutive words, and they smell their dinner burning.’

“I can see him now when he first joined. He had blue eyes about the shape and size of a six-weeks’ old kitten’s, and a complexion like an apple rubbed up with the corner of an old woman’s apron. One night at mess soon after he arrived someone asked him if he didn’t regret having lost all chance of becoming a bishop. He explained quite seriously that he had never had any: ‘There are no gawspel bishops.’ We should have let it pass at that, but the paymaster, a hoary old ruffian who was supposed to be getting on for seventy, and who died ten years later, ‘to the inexpressible grief of his wife aged fifty-four,’ a regular son of a sea-cook, told him he stood a very fair chance of being Bishop of Marines, as he had

joined young and it went chiefly by seniority, and he ought to get his name on the roster as soon as possible; and he had better ask the captain about it the next time he was at leisure. He swallowed it whole, but the following morning Franks told him in his dry, serious way that the captain might think his application premature, and he had better wait till the end of the commission. Franks often interfered if he thought things were being carried too far, but he never did it in a nasty, self-righteous way. If I'd had half his tact and a quarter his temper I should have been an Admiral of the Fleet.

“ Practical jokes often led to bad blood, more especially if the biter was bit. I recollect a lanky sub-lieutenant persuading a raw Scotch assistant-surgeon—he was more like a Shetland pony than anything else—to go and ask the captain where his cabin was. The captain saw that he had been hoaxed, and, after recommending him to have his hair cut without delay, he turned the matter over in his mind for a moment and then said: ‘There is a spare cabin. And, what’s more, you shall have it.’

“ I never met little Nothink again until I had my first (and only) captain’s command, and then I found he was to be my chaplain. He was hardly changed by a hair’s-breadth, and I felt quite glad to have him until one day when he was giving religious instruction to the ship’s boys under an



awning and I heard a few scraps of it as I walked up and down. First I heard him ask them to ‘picture the feelin’s of Sinkt Pahl when ’e ’eard the shots whistlin’ round ’im.’ I let that pass : he *might* have been thinking of slings and catapults. At any rate I couldn’t prove that he wasn’t. Soon after he asked from whom ‘Our Lord descended’ ? There was a long pause, and then one lad gabbled, ‘Descended into ’Ell.’ I let that pass ; it was too awful for words. Finally he said : ‘While we’re year in the bright noon-day, dear boys, in Nengland it’s the middle of the night.’ That was more than I *could* stand. I told the sentry to call him out, and said :

“‘Surely you are aware that England and the Cape of Good Hope are on almost the same parallel of longitude ?’ I could see that he no more knew what I meant than if I had spoken Greek, but I made him understand that he must stick to Scripture history, and that he had better give it without any trimmings. To bring the matter home to him I brought up what he had been saying about Sinkt Pahl, and I’m blessed if the little beggar didn’t tell me that artillery was mentioned ‘somewhere’ in the Old Testament ! I told him that Jonathan’s ‘artillery’ was on a par with the boy David’s ‘carriage’ ; and I said that he was a long sight too fond of argufying, and that it was contrary to the Naval Discipline Act ; and I reminded him of Jeshurun, who waxed fat



and kicked, and Zimri, who slew his master, and what's-'is-name who said, 'Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?' and then ran a knife into his commanding officer. I was getting into low water by that time, so I warned him that a man of many words would not prosper, and that a meek and quiet spirit was an ornament, especially on a black coat, and then I left him. He seemed rather dazed, but he was an awfully good little chap and never bore malice. He told everyone on board that I was a man who had searched the Scriptures.

"And I *have* searched the Scriptures. One commission I made a collection of texts for sermons, and used to offer them six or eight at a time to every sky-pilot I met. I never could understand why parsons stick to the same few passages when there are texts crying out to be used, and fitted to every contingency of life ashore or afloat or in harbour. You hear a new text about as often as you hear a good sermon, and, however badly your own parson preaches, he always finds a stop-gap who does it so much worse that you are quite glad to see him back again. Did I ever tell you of the old evangelical parson who was invited to preach for his ritualist son, and his text was : 'Lord have mercy on my son : for he is lunatick.' Well, the Lord had mercy on *him*, for he died before the young idiot took the final plunge. Not that I should wear myself to skin 'n griff if a son

of mine were inclined that way. If you go the right way to work you may stop a man from going to the Devil, but you'll never stop him from going to Rome. He'll do it to a dead certainty, and the sooner he's under proper discipline the better.

“It's a queer thing: Shaw's quite a religious man, but he can't endure to hear a text except in church. If he comes across one anywhere outside his own Bible and prayer-book, it seems to cause in him a kind of spiritual nausea. Often when he gets a letter from his widows and orphans he hands it over to his wife unopened and says: ‘I can't stand it. Tell me the gist of it. I *know* there are texts’—and he is always right.

“I remember some of the texts now. ‘Thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee.’ ‘Sing ye praises with understanding.’ ‘Beguiling unstable souls.’ ‘The line of confusion and the stones of emptiness.’ ‘At noon-day will I pray.’ I must say I like a broad daylight religion. Morning and evening religion is all very well, but in the morning almost any creed will do, and in the evening you may not be there; what we want is something for the heat and burden of the day. But my favourite, the one that I offered to the whole of them, was: ‘It burnt him, yet he laid it not to heart.’ What could you have better suited for us poor weak-kneed, backsliding fellows on a man-of-war? I remember pressing it on

our chaplain. He wasn't like poor dear little Nothink; he'd been to the university and all that kind of thing, but he was frightfully low-church. He said: 'I am pleading one cause—Eternal Salvation—and for the sake of the men it is impossible for me to be too plain and simple, or to repeat the gracious message too often.' I said: 'You take too much for granted. I've got a soul to be saved. How d'you know it isn't your business to save me, and mine to save the lower deck?' He said: 'There is only one way to be saved.' I said: 'Maybe so, but you don't know it.' It was what you might call an ambiguous phrase, and he took it in the irritating sense. We both lost our tempers, and I said a few things which it might have been better not to say, and which it's just as well not to repeat, but I think what really riled him was my telling him that excellent sermons could be bought for sixpence, and that I should be glad to contribute towards any reasonable outlay in that direction. He nearly cried with rage, and went to the captain and accused me of 'horrible blasphemies' and whispered a few of them in his ear. The old man never liked to let on that he was deaf, so he shook his head solemnly and said there must be some misunderstanding; I could not possibly have said anything so outrageous. But he took jolly good care not to ask me!

“Then the chaplain began a paper quarrel with

me, and it went on gaily at first, but a spell of bad weather came on and I hadn't time enough to devote to the matter, and it went by default. I never could make out what the fellow *had* learnt. Why, he bought a water-cooler for his cabin and wanted to return it because it leaked! He very seldom took grog, but, when he did, instead of ordering it and drinking it in a straightforward way, he used to begin like this: 'Er—steward—give me a glass of water.' Then a few minutes later, when men were beginning to think of their second glass: 'Ah—steward—I should like a bit of biscuit.' And then at last, what he wanted all the time: 'Oh—steward—I think I'll have a little brandy in this water.'

“Perhaps, after all, it was better than another chaplain I knew who always took his spirits neat, and expected everyone to know his habit. The first day he joined the ship he poured himself out a good half-glass, and while something drew off his attention for a moment the marine standing behind him slashed in some water. He turned on the man in a fury and roared: 'D—n your eyes, you've drowned the miller!' I must own it was the only time I ever heard him swear, and he had a way of putting a stopper on fellows who had the silly trick of swearing as much as they chose and then apologising to his cloth. He used to say cheerfully, 'My *dear* fellow, *that's* nothing,' the implication being that he could do far more



in that line himself if it were worth a sensible man's while.

"We used to make the mealy-mouthed one carve the poultry at table, not because he did it well—I remember Blissett put up a placard behind him, 'Mangling done here,' but someone hauled it down before he saw it—but because we felt we ought to try and get the country's money out of him somehow. All the time it was, 'My dear fellow, what can I send you? Have I helped you as you like?' and so forth, while he shuffled all the liver-wings under the drumsticks until he was ready to eat them.

"As far as I was concerned the birds might have been centipedes, but they were never tough. I was thirteen years out in China, and it was what we called a full-belly station. To this day I can't look a fowl in the face, and even on the lower deck they got tired of geese and turned back to salt-junk with a relish. As soon as we had eaten all the birds down to six weeks old we moved on, and we were back again before the skinny little beggars weighed a couple of pounds. I remember going once with this same chaplain to a two-o'clock family Sunday dinner. The man's wife carved, and there was a hare, and she asked him very politely what part he would like. He made no bones about it: 'I should like a slice out of the middle of the back.'

"He ought to have felt too much shocked to eat



any dinner at all. The poor woman thought they must say grace as a parson was there, though they weren't in the habit of doing it. She was a good soul but not exactly an authority on etiquette, and she looked at her husband and said in an imperative whisper, ‘Bob, say grace.’ He bent his head, turned purple, and stuttered out, ‘Bless the meat!’”

When Langley was quite an old man he was given a civil C.B. Strained relations with his superiors had prevented him from being mentioned in any despatch after an engagement with the enemy, and therefore the military division was out of the question. “What does it mean?” asked one of his grandchildren.

“It means, my dear, that I am a Civilised Beast. At least they think so.”

Shortly before his death he dropped sarcasm for a few moments, and said to a young lad just going out to India as a tea-planter: “Take evening-clothes with you, and if anyone wants to be kind to you, *let* them! I never let anyone be kind to me when I was young, and so I never became civilised. People were such snobs in those days, and it sickened me. One night four or five of us were invited to a small governor’s to dine. The youngest was a midshipman belonging to a very good family and he was told off to take the governor’s wife into dinner. That was a mere matter of course, but the fulsome way she talked

to him was disgusting. Some of the island people were there and she wanted to convince them that she knew everyone at home, and kept on asking for his cousin the marquess of this and his aunt the dowager countess of that. He got redder and redder and mumbled replies that no one could hear. At last she asked: 'And what was your father, Mr. Daysent?' In a thin sharp voice that could be heard from one end of the table to the other he said, calmly: 'My father, ma'am? Oh, *he* was a butcher.' We asked him afterwards what put the idea into his head, and he said: 'Well, my mother had to buy sheep from him, anyway. Beastly tough they were, too.'

"I remember another midshipman who was always being baited by an idle young assistant-surgeon—they were gun-room fry in those days and slept in hammocks, and if there was a cabin to spare the senior sub-lieutenant claimed it. The boy knew something that none of the rest of us knew, but he was a good-natured little chap and kept it to himself. One day the man began jeering at his clothes, and then at last he lost his temper, and out it came: 'It may be a very bad coat, doctor, and I dare say it is, but *your father made it.*'"

Unlike most sailors Langley kept up a correspondence with several old messmates, and many of his sayings were passed on to the next generation, and may bear one more repetition:

Ward-room cook's bread is better than none.

It is much easier to pretend you don't want things than to pretend that you have them.

Any man can be a conscientious bore. A conscious bore is a hero.

A tidy man is nearly always secretive.

Much depends on choice, but far more depends upon whether you make the best or the worst of your choice.

Our religion is like children's rules when playing. They say : “ If you touch me here or there, or if the ball goes over that fence, *it's not to count.*”

People are too fond of expecting gratitude for things they were never even asked to do. They ought to remember what a canny old Scot said a couple of hundred years ago : “ There is no injury worse nor compulsory kindness.”

The arrogance of assuming that your dog waits on the opposite bank with humble eagerness to greet you ! In the next world you may be your dog's dog.

What can be more unjust than to expect that other people should be just ?

Do parsons really desire to convert us ? Or doctors to cure us ? Or lawyers to settle our affairs satisfactorily ?

People keep all their commonsense for their own affairs.

The respectable man is told : “ It's all a matter of environment : in the same position you

would be just the same." But has not the respectable man refused the evil and chosen the good of his own surroundings? Has the man born in a crowded street no power at all to do the same? If he had not, and if he did not as a rule exercise it, the whole country would be "in peril of salvation."

Quarrels between men and women, rich and poor, old and young, are never atoned. They use different weapons and obey different rules.

Nothing would bore and exasperate me more than a person taking a purely sympathetic interest in things that deeply affected me.

How much religion must we carry to the Bible before we can find any there?

Flattery is like manna, of which the Israelites always had enough whether they gathered much or little.

It is comparative peace to know what you want and to know you can't get it. Anything's better than the unrest of not knowing what you want, or the emptiness of thinking there is nothing you *do* want.

Almost anything is possible. People who intend to remain sane stick to probabilities, strong probabilities.

It is much more difficult to be a passable father than to be a good husband. Your children never meet you half way.



If a woman's traditional weapons are lying, tears, and flattery, a man's are flattery, lying, and bluster. In both cases only flattery stands hard wear.

Unfortunately the question in life is not whether one has much patience or little, but whether one has *enough*.

We seem in a bad way, whether because of the new learning or because of forgetting the old.

Her troubles were always like an expansive gas. One was enough to fill her mind, and a dozen could do no more.

We might divide our acquaintances into those who look for change through life and those who look for it through death. Their own or others'.

Difference of opinion as to what constitutes evidence may well separate chief friends.

“In vain is the net spread.” Not at all: it flatters the human bird.

If I give all I have, I shall steadily have less and less to give.

I don't think I was ever guilty of the hateful ingratitude of telling a man his own favourite yarn.

“Ce n'est que le premier pas qui coûte.” Rubbish. It's the last step. We are all ready enough to begin.

The more affected some fellows' manners are, the better I like them.

Don't call on heaven and earth to stand still while you get through your little bit of work.

You wouldn't marry her "if she were the only woman on earth"? Doesn't it strike you that in that case the competition might be a little severe?

A young man is certain to get into difficulties of one kind or another. What really matters is the way he gets out of them.

What keeps a rose a rose but the power of selection? The selective power of inborn character is shown every moment of the day. The stupid are always hearing and reporting folly, and the malicious malice.

Why do the prophesied ill results not happen? Often it is because all people of goodwill combine to prevent the results they have foretold.

Woman's incurable hopefulness shows that she is better fitted to deal with the young than with adults.

Class is permanent because necessary. To be shunned by his own class is the worst punishment that can befall any man, and the fear of it is a strong restraint. Class provides a public more exacting in some of its demands than the family, and more just and accurate than the world at large.

It was merely a seed of experience sown in her imagination.

To say, "I can do as much as ever I could,"

is more often a reproach to one's youth than a credit to one's age.

I could not let my children go there until they are older ; it might spoil their moral accent.

Get as near to a place as you can before you begin asking the way.

## IV. THE BORE'S PROGRESS

An acquisition—A self-taught artist—The linguist—Anecdote  
—A test-case—Four shillings a day. A timely legacy—Marriage  
—Provisional patents—A “valued contributor”

H ESELTINE'S messmates always began by thinking him an acquisition and ended by labelling him a consummate bore, but even towards the close of a four-years' commission they felt proud of him on guest-nights. A long line of captains had called him “a very gentlemanly fellow who invariably makes a good impression on educated foreigners.” An equally unbroken succession of boatswains had taken the whistle from their mouths and tightened the corners of their lips to combine emphasis with discretion, and pronounced that “if he lives to be a thousand he won't know how to 'andle a cock-boat.” The unanimous verdict of the lower deck took the form of damning praise: “There ain't, so to say, any *'arm* in 'im.”

Heseltine was a self-taught water-colour painter of tireless industry, and bestowed his sketches generously upon his shipmates. Few were considered worthy of framing, and they disappeared



almost as certainly as last year's almanacs, until a more discriminating relative sent one of them to the Royal Academy, where it was accepted, but fortunately for the artist's service career was returned unsold. After that the innocent philistines religiously hoarded every daub weeded out of his portfolio and those of his imitators, and for half a century these all held honoured places in their wives' drawing-rooms. "Done the same year that he exhibited at the Royal Academy," they would say, although his nominal output during that period would have papered a £60 villa from attic to cellar.

The artist was also something of a linguist, could hammer out Cæsar's *Commentaries*, Schiller's *Thirty Years' War*, the *Promessi Sposi*, and *Gil Blas*. These four books lasted him throughout eight complete commissions and a considerable amount of broken time, as a franc-an-hour teacher engaged in Malta had told him that it is better to read one page twenty times than to read twenty pages once, and advised him always to read aloud. The only foreign author who had ever tempted him to a more rapid rate of reading was Molière.

He prided himself on his ability to "make himself understood in seven languages." One specimen will suffice. He requested a niece who had been living in Germany for some years to "enter into a little light conversation with him to test his colloquial powers." Nervously anxious

not to go beyond them, she asked him if he thought it would rain. After visible hesitation he replied : " Weer will seen."

A good many years before this the ward-room had on one occasion run short of wine, and the senior member hailed a passing French vessel and sent Heseltine on board to ask if they carried more wine than they needed. He returned without any, and followed by such very intelligible abuse that his messmates could only conclude that he had inadvertently altered the tense, and transposed the message into an inquiry as to whether the strangers "had had more wine than they could carry."

On Sundays he read Alison's *History of Europe*, and Napier's *War in the Peninsula*, in ten and seven volumes respectively. When he first joined the ward-room he had a *Dictionary of Anecdote*, which he used to study for ten minutes every evening while he dressed for dinner. It was known that his early days had been spent in Ireland, so his somewhat premature anecdotage passed for a natural gift, and was well received until one unlucky day when Shaw went in to ask him a question and observed the book lying open on his chest of drawers. After that they laughed at him until most men would have flung the book overboard in a fury, but he quietly returned it to the shelf, and at the next port exchanged it for a mouldy Greek lexicon.

“It shows what fools men are,” commented Shaw many years later. “However old the yarns may have been they were new to us, and we enjoyed them, especially as he had enough natural wit to enable him to bring them in with a fair amount of àpropos, but directly we knew where they came from we howled him down every time he tried to open his lips.”

In English Heseltine was something of a purist, went out of his way to use the subjunctive mood, said know-ledge and illustrate when he could resist local influence, abhorred the service use of lay and laid for lie and lay, and, if he chanced to say won't or don't, hastily corrected himself. If ladies were present he apologised. He was still saying mighty and vast and precious and monstrous when most of his contemporaries said “awfully,” and a few degenerates of seventy-five or thereabouts had arrived at “ripping.” On the other hand, in middle life he definitely and consciously gave up Toosday, stoopid, and dook. Strangely enough when Shaw, most seriously scandalised by the incident, told him that a young lieutenant had been heard using a piece of modern music-hall slang when giving an order to his men, he utterly failed to realise the enormity of the offence.

Questions of pronunciation were well known to be the breath of life to him. Once when he was lying in his berth and seemed to be collapsing from the after-effects of a successfully resisted attack

of yellow fever, the young Scotch surgeon reported to the captain in despair :

“ We can’t rouse him. He eats nothing.”

“ Have you tried champagne ? ”

“ He has had a quart bottle in less than three hours.”

“ Well, when his lunch is ready give him my compliments, and say I’m glad to hear he’s getting on so well ; and tell him that when I was ashore yesterday I walked through the earthquake quarter with Lord —, and that he pronounced rubble exactly like rouble, and I should like to have his opinion of the matter in writing within the next twenty-four hours.”

Heseltine always spoke of one ship with intense affection. “ I had nothing to complain of except that three of the fellows would pronounce miracle as if it were spelled miricle.” The most trying period of his service life was a three years’ commission spent with a chaplain who dispensed, as far as practicable, with the use of the letter *h*. He could just manage to sound it in ha’penny, but only by dint of saying half-penny. Heseltine had prudence enough to know that interference with such a habit was a more delicate matter than any with which he had previously dealt, but the case troubled him from a social and a religious as well as a linguistic standpoint : the chaplain was an excellent man, and was openly ridiculed by every youngster on the ship.



After years of toil Heseltine had reached as far as Gil Blas' lamentable experience with the Archbishop of Granada, and before taking an irrevocable step he related the story to the chaplain and asked his opinion. "Serve 'im right," was the reply. "I took that for my answer," Heseltine would say in melancholy self-justification, mingled with a tinge of self-reproach; "I abandoned him to his fate."

On one subject he was wholly without affectation or reserve, namely, the pressing and extreme poverty of his early days. As a temporary lapse he may have spoken of the *res angusta domi*, but translation followed hard.

"My father was an old before-the-peace lieutenant with ten children, six of them boys, and four shillings a day. We lived in Ireland because we were somehow stranded there, and food was cheap and my mother was a marvellous manager. I was the eldest, and when I was sixteen and in danger of turning into an Irish loafer, with an accent that you might cut with a knife, a ship was sent round by the Admiralty recruiting boys of all classes. The captain offered to take me as a first-class volunteer, the equivalent of a modern naval cadet, if my father would guarantee me an allowance of £50 a year. He signed the paper, but of course I never drew it. I should have been a mean young scoundrel if I had! Why, he used to hand all his pay over to my mother, and then ask her for



sixpence to buy tobacco. In memory of him I always vote Conservative, but I am sure I do not know why he did it, for he used to say that the Tory principle with regard to naval officers was : ' Keep 'em poor and they'll serve you well.'

" What my mother went through living in that God-forsaken hole ! I recollect one winter evening when she and I and the rest of the children and a maid-servant were alone in the house, and three ruffianly men knocked at the door and wanted to search for arms. My mother shouted, ' John, Frank, Joe, after them ! ' and rolled her stock of cheeses one after the other down the wooden stairs to simulate the sound of heavy footsteps, and the rascals ran off as hard as they could go. On Saturdays she used to have fried potatoes for supper, and after church on Sunday she read the cookery-book, especially the recipes with truffles and isinglass and oysters.

" My father was heir to £30,000. At least he said so, but my mother never believed a word of it until soon after I went to sea, when a legacy of £1800 dropped in, and she found that it caused him bitter disappointment. He talked of a death-bed will and a guided hand, and perhaps it was true, but my mother would not hear of going to law. She had necessarily adopted the habit of discounting all he said, and although she was an immensely clever woman she may sometimes have taken the discount off in the wrong place.

“As far as my father was concerned the money would have been wasted in a year, but my mother invested it at nine per cent. That sounds like wasting it in a week, but when she died thirty years later more than half of the capital was still in existence. The rest had gone in educating her daughters and buying outfits for her sons. Most women in those days would have reversed the process, but she said that a successful man could dress as he liked after he was thirty, and a woman had no need of expensive clothes while she was young, and that boys could pick up their education as they went along and girls could not. So we had the purple and fine linen and went out to seek our fortunes, and my sisters went to school and learnt French and Latin.”

Heseltine had a profound dislike to what he called “naval women,” and listened with silent horror to Blissett’s fabulous relations of his mother’s dealings with the Admiralty. In early days he frequently and solemnly announced:

“I shall marry a woman who does not know the bow from the stern, and when I am at sea she shall be fifty miles away from a naval port.”

“M—m—yes,” said Langley one evening, “I knew a man who used to say that, and did it too.”

“Well?”

“When he came back she was considerably more than fifty miles away. ‘Trust ’em all in all or not at all,’ is the only motto for a sailor

or any other man. And whatever you do, Heseltine, be sure to marry a woman who talks a great deal."

"It's always difficult enough to know what a woman thinks," put in Shaw, "but if she doesn't talk you are absolutely in the dark."

"And silence generally spells criticism," resumed Langley, "and sometimes it is mere laziness and apathy. Besides, talkativeness is a sure sign of health and energy. If a woman doesn't talk to an apparently wasteful extent while she is young and strong, how is she to economise force when she gets older? She can't give up work. At least not if you contemplate living on your pay."

"And if you do that you must take care to choose a poor man's daughter," said Shaw.

"Balderdash!" cried Langley brusquely. "It doesn't matter a rap whether her father's rich or poor. The real point is, Did he live within his means? As long as he did that, you may be tolerably certain that she will do the same. If you are poorer than other people in your class of life there is a strong presumption that you are extravagant, and if you're better off it is a sign of economy."

"But as to talkativeness," objected Heseltine, "you all accuse me of talking too much, and I——"

"You are not speaking with your usual precision. If I have ever accused you of anything, it is not of talking too much, but of saying too little."

“And I have always understood that men should marry wives unlike themselves.”

“A most damnable heresy,” said Langley, “and one which fully accounts for the miserably slow rate of social progress. Doubtless it sometimes leads to a hollow and deceptive domestic peace; no error in conduct could persist if its immediate results were not often of a pleasing nature.”

“You know very well,” cried Shaw impatiently, “that if you had a wife as reckless of speech as yourself you would pitch into her like blazes.”

“*Course* I should.”

“And then she'd tell you that people who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones.”

“I fancy she would say something a little more subtle, but at the moment I can't tell you exactly what. Supposing, however, for the sake of argument, that in private life she used such a smooth stone from the brook as the proverb you quote, the next move in the game would be perfectly simple. I should tell her that only those who live in glass houses can with any decency throw stones.”

“And then?”

“I can't tell you the next, or the next but one and twenty, but ultimately, after making such a deuce of a row, I should have to be more careful, and so would she. Suppose, on the other hand, that I were a mealy-mouthed, cautious fellow, I should be very likely to mistake her recklessness



and flippancy for wit, and encourage her in it till she hadn't a friend in the world. And if I married a gentle, quiet, prudent woman I shouldn't be able to appreciate her virtues. I shouldn't know the cost."

"I've been married four years," said Shaw, "and you seem to think you know a vast deal more about the whole matter than I do."

"Considering that three years and ten months of that time have been spent on foreign service, is it an altogether unwarranted assumption? And although I am not married myself I lived nearly fourteen years with married people."

"You mean as a child?"

"Yes; I studied human nature while you were wasting your time at school. You have often told us that you went before you were six."

"And can't human nature be studied at school? Or in the navy?"

"Or in a prison? What can you know of human nature as a whole? We spend most of our time in a world shut off from women, and old men, and children, and sick people, and nearly all kinds of rogues, and students, and downright fools."

"Poets and novelists do not agree with you, Langley," said Heseltine, lagging far behind.

"If you drag poets into it Shaw *will* agree with me, and he has a chest-voice worth any amount of argument. He hasn't read a square inch of poetry in his life, and doesn't mean to."

“And yet on the strength of a single line he confuted the theory that Shakespeare had ever been at sea.”

“What was the line, Shaw? It’s beyond me.”

“He said, somewhere or other, I can’t give you the latitude and longitude, that a man’s wits were dry as the remainder biscuit after a voyage. If he had ever been at sea he would have known that old biscuit is soft and weevilly.”

“So he would,” said Langley with a shudder. (He had a womanish disgust for insects, even when unmixed with his daily bread.)

“Where did you hear it? D’you know any more?”

“My wife made me go to some Shakespeare readings with her. The man read well. It didn’t sound like poetry. At least, not objectionably so. I only remember two other scraps: ‘Hover through the fog and filthy air,’ which always reminds me of north country towns in the winter: and ‘The uncertain glory of an April day.’ That gives you all Devon and Cornwall in seven words. It refreshes me in the tropics.”

“Just like Shaw’s practicality,” said Heseltine. “If he picked up anything, no matter what, he would be worried until he found a use for it.”

“I’m not sure he isn’t a bit of a poet himself,” said Langley. “Oh”—as Shaw made an indignant and somewhat unnecessary disclaimer—“he is quite right to keep it dark, but if ever he finds

leisure to consider the matter I think he will perceive that what he dislikes is poems, not poetry."

"And I shall certainly take care to marry a really domesticated woman," continued Heseltine. "To marry a woman who is not a good cook is suicidal for a poor man. It means the slow destruction of your constitution."

"And marrying a good cook means the rapid destruction of your figure. My mother and her sisters were all the worst cooks imaginable, and I hope my wife will equal them. If any woman entered the house who knew a thing about it they unlearned her in a week. And what's the result?" Neither of his hearers hazarded a guess. "Why, their husbands are all alive and kicking, and all well over seventy. Only the other day one of them put on his youngest son's overcoat by mistake, and looked uncommonly well in it. Good cooking is a vast mistake. We don't need any encouragement to eat, especially when past thirty, and voluntary abstinence under temptation uses up mental force. What we need is to be steadily and consistently discouraged by very indifferent plain cooking."

"But plain cooking is so monotonous," objected Heseltine. He was one of the most temperate of men, and food affected his imagination more than his appetite.

"*Monotonous!* Think of the variety that can

be got out of boiled potatoes. Monotonous, indeed ! ”

“ Yes,” said Shaw dogmatically. “ A boiled potato can only be done, or under-done, or over-done.”

“ A very superficial view. My father and all his brothers-in-law could have named a dozen subdivisions in each class, besides the days when their wives forgot to order any potatoes, or the maids put on the saucepan without water or without potatoes. Send them all packing ? My dear fellow, you don't suppose any one of them was ever permitted to find fault with a maid-servant ? And they dared not find fault with their wives. Ah, there are fine traditions of husband training in *our* family ! I have a cousin, a little slip of a creature hardly up to Shaw's elbow, and she married a city man with an awful reputation for bad temper. One night he came home in a captious mood ; he wouldn't eat the soup because it was peppery or the fish because it was cold, and then came a pair of roast fowls and a large piece of ham. He began carving and suddenly stopped short, and protested they had every fault it was possible for birds to possess. My cousin said they were average specimens, and not at all badly cooked. He snatched up the dish and pitched it through the window. She said : ‘ The ham had better go too,’ and flung it after the fowls. And the land had peace for forty years.”



"She oughtn't to have told you," said Shaw, naturally sympathising with the husband.

"You bet she didn't! He told me himself. Said it did him no end of good."

"I shall take especial care to choose a good-tempered wife," said Heseltine in his slow, even tones.

"I've no objection to *that*, none at all," said Langley cordially, "You are a most exceedingly good-tempered man yourself. Ah, I see you are coming round to my views!"

"I don't wish to say anything disagreeable, Langley, but—" This was a favourite opening of Shaw's, much dreaded by most of his friends, but Langley met his slightly worried look with amused interest—"do you seriously consider that it would be *safe* for you to marry a woman with a temper like your own?"

"Take a hopeful view, old boy. Perhaps I shan't be able to find one. *You* didn't."

"Thank Heaven, no!" said Shaw with perfect sincerity. He held most exaggerated views as to the ferocity of his temper, and never heard of any man being convicted of manslaughter without the instant self-reminder: "There, but for the grace of God, go I."

"And just think of the economy implied by bad plain cooking," resumed Langley. "D'you remember old Mrs. Rideout, Tom Rideout's mother? You must have met him, Shaw, even

if you didn't know her. A conk-nosed fellow rather like myself, but heavier? He's junior to you on the list, but I know he's four or five years older than I am, which makes ten."

"I've often come across his traces. A muddle-headed lout. Built much on the same lines as Byam's Blue Marine."

"Yes, the old dummon had all the brains—and kept 'em, as far as her sons were concerned. She was a dear vulgar old soul, and she used to say: 'Naval officers aren't allowed to save out of their backs, so they must save out of their bellies.' And she made her husband do it, too! One egg for breakfast, and a scrap of cheese and a small half-pint of beer for supper. She saved close on £2000 while they still had Tom and his brother and a couple of daughters on their hands."

"What interest did she get?" asked Heseltine, remembering his mother's fateful investment.

"Interest! She thought interest would turn the old boy's brain. Neither of *them* ever saw a farthing of interest, and I don't know that Tom will. She spent it all buying bits of swampy ground that would be worth a hundred times what she gave for them in forty or fifty years' time. The Admiralty are bound to buy a good slice of it, though they swear they won't—some of them would come out of their graves to spite old Mother Rideout—and when the townspeople have given up shooting rubbish on the rest it will

be christened 'Rideout Park Estate,' and chopped up for building purposes, sixteen or twenty houses to the acre. Tom hasn't sixpence to spare, but the grandsons will be rich men."

"I don't believe in that kind of thing," said Shaw, as much worried as if the matter called for instant decision. "I shall save all I can to make matters easier for my wife when I die, and I shall do my best to put my sons in a good position to earn their own living, but I'm hanged if I'll earn it *for* them, and as to grandsons——"

"You refuse to be stinted of hen's eggs and beer in order that they may have plover's eggs and champagne without working for them? I believe you'll stick to it, too; but Heseltine will have to keep a bright look-out; I can see as plain as a pikestaff that his wife will be a mighty obstinate foreboding woman, and because to-morrow is sometimes more important than to-day she'll argue that the middle of next century affects him more than the middle of next week. And I don't think his constitution would stand as much of it as old Rideout's. He married late, and lived to ninety-four."

"His father was a farmer," said Shaw.

"Ah, that accounts for it. A family can no more stand three generations of saving out of your pay than it can stand three generations of riotous living. On the whole, I think your wife had better be a little extravagant. Not enough

to bring the bailiffs in, you know, but enough to put a stopper on saving. Let your sons start fresh. Perhaps it wouldn't be amiss if she had a little money of her own."

"No ; but I do not wish to be hampered in my choice. What I chiefly desire is companionship, sympathetic companionship," droned Heseltine.

"Sounds rather tedious—for the lady. And nothing is so sympathetic as solitude, when you have once arrived at the point of talking to yourself and saying what a devilish good fellow you are."

"If you want a strong woman," said Shaw solemnly, "choose a thin white-faced one. They eat all the food and have all the strength. Just in the same way, if you want good sight, don't choose a dark eye that looks as if it could pierce the keep of Portchester Castle, but a pale grey, rather small.

(With the busy idleness of a man shut off from the world, Langley instantly concluded that Mrs. Shaw had eyes as dark and short-sighted as his own, that she had a brilliant complexion, and that her husband was anxious about her health. Two years later he unhesitatingly picked her out from among a dozen naval officers' wives and introduced his own wife, who was still sufficiently a stranger to feel surprised when she afterwards learnt that it was their first meeting.)

Heseltine was faintly displeased. "I—er—do



not imagine that every detail can be arranged beforehand. I think of essentials. For instance, I do not wish for an ambitious wife."

"Quite right," said Langley, "it would be like serving for life under men who were working for their promotion."

"But if there were no ambition on either side, what would become of a man's sons?" asked Shaw.

"There may be one or two flaws in my theory," Langley conceded. "It isn't fully worked out yet."

Heseltine ignored the sage advice received from his messmates, and ultimately married a lady chiefly distinguished by her great taciturnity and the rigidity of her back-bone. In a moment of unusual intimacy she told a young friend that she owed the erectness of her carriage to the fact that she had never worn supports. When she was about twelve years old her mother, otherwise an excellent woman, bought her an exceedingly stiff and strait pair of stays and insisted on their being worn in a country scarcely outside the tropics. The pain and sense of suffocation were unbearable, and she privately appealed to her father, who said, "Burn them. Sit up as if you had swallowed a ramrod, and your mother will never find it out."

Heseltine chose her under the wholly mistaken impression that a silent person is necessarily a sympathetic listener. The subsequent disillusionment, coupled with the observed fact that Langley's

excitable vivacious wife could hear everything that her husband said even while going full speed ahead on her own account, darkened all his views of matrimony. "When my husband has anything new to say," Mrs. Langley explained, "I always listen, just as I always gaze in the looking-glass when I have a new bonnet. Why should I do it at other times?"

As before stated, Heseltine was nothing of a sailor, and as a young man did not even develop the scientific interest in his profession which enabled Franks to hold his own among men who, as far as practical seamanship was concerned, "could have doubled him into a cocked-hat"; but in late middle age the advent of ironclads was a deeply perturbing element in his consciousness, and for many years a large part of his leisure was devoted to the invention of hopelessly complicated appliances for overcoming what he called "their inherent defect." In plain English, used in a moment of rare irritation to meet some argument of Shaw's: "A wooden tub wants to float if it can, and an iron pot wants to sink." "Not unless you knock a hole in it; and why should you?" asked Shaw contentiously. But Heseltine's mind had harked back to the lamentable inelegance of his simile, and was bent on comparing a wooden line-of-battle ship to the Pyramids of Egypt and an ironclad to a Gothic cathedral, but the analogy "wouldn't run on all fours," and fell rather flat.

Fortunately for his wife and family he contented himself with taking out ten or a dozen provisional patents, and made no attempt to raise capital to float any of his inventions. Shaw, who never touched a pencil, and could do nothing with a pen except write, and who could not look at a tool of any description without cutting or bruising his shapely brown hands, was perfectly ready to admire the exquisitely precise mechanical drawings as works of art, and the models as remarkably ingenious toys, but the notion of their ever being of the smallest practical use exhausted his very limited store of patience. Prevention was better than cure: what was the use of staving in a ship's side and then applying a patent plaster? Collisions meant bad seamanship or reckless navigation, and neither of these was an offence that needs must come.

After many years of these studies, unchecked by experiment or experience, a serious collision between two ironclads occurred, and Heseltine went a long journey to see the nature and extent of the damage. On his return, Shaw, who noted that he was looking "rather down in the mouth," asked if he thought his precious appliance would have been of any use if it had been on the spot at the time, and was utterly disarmed by the candour and coarse simplicity of his reply: "I never realised what a complete smash-up it would be. The plates were ripped asunder as if they had

been sewn with rotten thread. Use my invention on that awful gap ? *You might as well spit on it !* ”

Soon after this the models were turned into birthday presents for young nephews and grandsons, and Shaw did not even remind his old shipmate of the celebrated chief-carpenter who began making a mainmast out of a very fine tree-trunk, and after a series of misfits ended by producing a good-sized button for the captain's pantry door.

A few months later he suddenly took up the decidedly illogical position that, although iron-clads were a hideous and costly aberration from the true doctrines of naval construction, sailing and rowing-boats should no longer be made of wood but of copper. The chief argument that he brought forward was that when a wooden boat was worn out the materials were fit for nothing but fuel, while an old copper boat would be worth very nearly as much as a new one. “ Quite as much,” said Shaw drily.

With regard to the personnel of the navy, Heseltine held opinions which he was never allowed to explain at length if Shaw could manage to silence him. His notions were “ moonshine,” or “ in defiance of commonsense,” and some were even held to be against morality and the public welfare. Heseltine highly disapproved of the general lines of promotion—selection among the lower ranks, seniority among the higher. “ It should be exactly reversed. It is useless to take



a young man's character into consideration : he has none. It is dangerous to ignore an older man's character or to take his abilities for granted. To borrow Pope's words and apply them to my own purpose, the public services will never be properly manned while ' People will establish their opinion of us from what we do at the season when we have least judgment to direct us.' ”

Franks listened to this one day with his usual patience, but shook his head over the prospect opened up. “ If every hare-brained midshipman became a mate, and every drunken mate a lieutenant, do you seriously think that the standard of character and ability among commanders and captains would be improved ? ”

“ They wouldn't have any character at all,” said Langley, “ except the sort of character that is given gratis to dead men. Shut your eyes to every youngster's conduct, and every ship would be sunk and every man drowned.”

Late in life Heseltine was invited to contribute a brief article to a “ monumental work.” During its lengthy and laborious compilation none of his old shipmates ever met him without being told of some new theories of philology or teleology that he had formed by the way and introduced, but the MS. must have been severely edited. When his friends examined the text every one of these jewels of thought had been so skilfully unset and removed that no trace of the operation could be discerned.

## V. NATHANIEL

A disputed right—Schooldays—The art of dress—An expert witness—Intermittent zeal—Landlord and tenant—Investments—Developing the property—A lodge in the wilderness—The main structure—A visit of inspection—Buying and selling—Living on the loss

**J**OHNNY ELLIOTT—Jacks were mostly lower-deck folk in those days—was Shaw's oldest friend, and he was sincerely attached to him. Few people could have criticised him in his hearing without provoking the recital of a long list of virtues and good deeds. Nevertheless, he persisted in regarding Johnny's marked Scotch accent as an offensive affectation. A Scotch accent was not a bad thing *per se*, in truth it was pleasing in his ears, but he maintained that no man could be entitled to it from the mere fact of marriage with a Scotswoman, and that that was his sole claim.

“He's English. As English as I am. His father and grandfather were in the navy before him, and his mother was born in Plymouth. One of her brothers was lost out in Corsica. I have often heard the tale. He and the paymaster drew some money and went ashore together one afternoon, and disappeared as completely as if the earth had

swallowed them up. They were never heard of again."

"Was no search made?"

"I suppose so. After a fashion. But people didn't set the same value on life in those days. It was taken for granted that brigands had killed them. Why, a man not much my senior was lost in Borneo, and years afterwards a report reached England that he had been seen working up in the interior as a slave in a mine. His mother believed it, and to her dying day she was always expecting him, but nothing was done. So"—suddenly returning to the point—"what possible right has he to multiply his *r*'s and lengthen out his *a*'s? Why, a Scotch surgeon would be ashamed of it!"

"That memory of yours will bring you into trouble one of these days," said Langley. "A nice little libel action would sweep off all your savings and land you in the bankruptcy court before you knew where you were. Eighty pounds a year is about what they'd allow you. You may be careful, but you'd find it a tight fit. Johnny told me that his father had a coastguard billet up the Clyde for twenty years. He was what they used to call Riding Officer. I remember it because once—he must have been a bit like Johnny—he thought he would review all his men on a village common, and the horse got frightened and bolted off with him ten miles to the farm where it was bred. His mother's father was a Writer to the Signet in

Edinburgh, and he never came across the border until he was twelve or thirteen."

"I was at school with him in London, and I can assure you he hadn't a trace of the accent then."

"Perhaps you weren't as hypercritical in those days. Any way, he must have been a jolly little chap. I never went to school. My father's living was £200, and always in arrears. My mother taught me the three R's—parts of them—and my father tried to knock a little Latin into my head, and then I was pitchforked into the navy. I had never heard of decimals, and as for Euclid—an angle might have been the feminine of an Anglican for all I knew or cared."

"Johnny was in the same boat. He learnt a few problems of Euclid by heart, but if you changed A for B he was done for. As for algebra, he never looked at it through the wrong end of a spy-glass. He didn't learn vulgar fractions until long after he entered the service, and even then he couldn't tell what two-thirds of three-fourths of a shilling amounted to without getting a pencil and paper to calculate. As to his handwriting, well, a boy fresh from a modern crammer's could hardly write worse.

"Poor old Johnny! He used to write his wife a sheet of foolscap every week. First it was covered in black ink and then crossed at right angles in red: one letter must have lasted until



the next came. About five years after he was married we were lying out at Spithead, and he had a letter from the admiral and couldn't read a word of it except his own name. I couldn't make head or tail of it myself, neither could anyone else in the mess, and Blissett shouted out: 'Take it home to your wife. If she reads your writing she can read anything under the sun, barring Chinese.' And so she did. She stood it on the mantelpiece and walked up to it suddenly, stopping about four feet short, as she says it is a mistake ever to hold bad writing close to you. It was an invitation to dinner. Johnny only just had time to scramble into full-dress uniform and scuttle off without stopping to brush his hair."

"What a mop he has!"

"Yes; a marvellous crop. Perhaps I saved it for him. When he came to school it was awfully thin; I fancy he had been ill, and his mother had given him a pot of bear's grease to rub on at night. One of the boys had a hair trunk, a thing rather out of date even then, but Johnny admired it hugely. If ever he envied anyone in his life it was that boy! I said in jest: 'It only comes from a different way of treating the leather. Rub your bear's grease on it and it will bring the hair out in no time.' He rubbed the whole of the pot in that very night!"

"The last thing I remember of him at school was a row about window-smashing. It rested

between Johnny and about a dozen other boys. They all denied it, and there wasn't a particle of evidence against any one of them, but the master picked out the most likely criminal and sent him to the head-master to be birched. Just in time Johnny owned up. I told his wife about it the other day, and she really seemed rather shocked that he had 'so nearly let the other poor boy be punished.' Johnny said: 'I tell you what, dear: if I had had the least conception how infernally it would hurt me I should *never* have owned up.'"

"I remember when they used to shut him inside his chest on Sunday mornings while the captain went his rounds. It saved swearing. Did you ever see a man dress so badly, in uniform or out?"

"Not often. But it was merely in a shabby, comfortable, harmless way. He never ran to checks and stripes and jewellery."

"A precious good thing, too!" cried Langley, defending himself from a side-blow at some youthful indiscretions in that line. "His taste is execrable."

Shaw hesitated over the choice of pleasures, and then succumbed to temptation.

"When we were out in China he set his heart on a shawl, 'the loveliest thing you ever saw,' and asked me to come and help him buy it. You know in those days there was no such thing as a fixed price, and it sometimes took you five weeks to spend fifty dollars. The shawl was the most awful thing imaginable—magenta picked out with

pale blue. I persuaded him that as his wife was nearly always in mourning—never knew a woman with so many cousins—a white one would be better. I don't think I should have won the day, but I looked in one afternoon by myself and advised the heathen Chinees to put it in an awfully gaudy lacquer box, and say 'all best missus likee same.'"

"I remember the shawl," said Langley. "My wife always said the cousins were a polite fiction to prevent Johnny from choosing her clothes. When she sees a desperately ill-dressed woman she says, 'If her husband had bought everything she has on, she couldn't look worse.'"

"No, the cousins were genuine enough, but she made the most of 'em. I've known one last her three or four years when they hung fire a bit. You can't wonder at it. Even after we arrived in England he wasn't satisfied about that shawl. We went in to Emmanuel's together and he bought his wife a gold chain like a publican's in a teetotal tract."

"And you changed it the next day for that thing six yards long and a hundred links to the inch. It is usually tied up in six or eight places with white silk. When it comes to a dozen she sends it to be mended."

"'T any rate it's more in keeping than a chain you could have moored a brig with," protested Shaw.

"Well, I've seen her wearing beads that might have been used for shot drill."

Shaw turned a deaf ear : he had sanctioned the purchase of the beads, regarding them merely as curiosities, and never imagining that "any white woman" would be complaisant enough to wear them.

"Do you remember bullying him into wearing your wedding waistcoat instead of the one he had chosen ? And you compelled at least six other fellows to do the same."

"Only three. Their wives don't know what they escaped. They ought to have been most grateful to me."

"Perhaps they would have been, but wives had a fancy for keeping pieces of their husbands' wedding waistcoats, and they could hardly nip a piece out of yours."

"Couldn't they ! Stewart's wife collared it whole. I never saw it again."

"Aha ! that explains why I didn't have to wear it myself. I marvelled at my escape."

"What was it like ?" asked O'Keefe, who was born a little too late for fancy waistcoats.

"White satin embroidered with blue forget-me-nots with green leaves and gold eyes."

"They were very small and—and—dim," stammered Shaw, flushing a little at O'Keefe's obvious astonishment, "and very little of it showed."

"Now my wife *would* have let you have a piece of it. Look here, Stewart and his wife are in



town. If I meet them next week I'll tax her with it, and see if I can't get it out of her."

"After all these years she thinks it's her own."

"Anyway she can't deny that you were married in it yourself. She ought to go shares with your wife and Mrs. Elliott. And Mrs. Heseltine would like a piece. She spends half her time making patchwork."

"No, *no*—I don't want it broken up. I'd rather she kept it."

"A second judgment of Solomon! If you could repeat that *cri du cœur* in a law-court the jury would instantly inform the judge that they didn't need any more evidence."

"I've only been in a law-court once in my life."

"Assault and battery?" suggested O'Keefe.

"You can tickle a giant when he has had a good dinner. I was an expert witness. An awful lot of hard swearing both sides."

"Ah, Admiralty and Divorce? That's the real reason why they're always bracketed: it maintains a comparatively high standard in the other divisions," explained Langley.

"There was an impudent Q.C. who harassed me a good deal. I told him the plain truth, but he didn't want to know it."

"It must have made the rest of the tale look 'a lee-tle out of drawing,' as Heseltine used to say when Johnny showed him his attempts as a marine artist."

“ And then the fellow looked at me most superciliously and said: ‘ I don’t agree with you.’ I said: ‘ As you know nothing whatever about it except what you sat up last night to learn, I don’t care a hang whether you agree with me or not.’ ”

“ Who won ? ”

“ Our side.”

“ Mark how a plain tale put them down.”

“ Not a bit of it. It was a clear case with no possible room for doubt, but we should never have won if a dozen or more men on our side hadn’t sworn hard and fast about details they couldn’t possibly remember, and which every seaman knew weren’t of the smallest consequence.”

“ No wonder Mrs. Elliot hardly likes to leave you alone with Johnny. He picks up scraps of cynical commonsense, and they sound as odd as if he were five years old.”

Elliott was a zealous officer when actually at work, but unambitious and with little staying power. He went cheerfully wherever he was sent, but found excellent reasons for not remaining there. At a time when commissions were nearly double their present length he boasted that he had never remained two consecutive years out of England. He had no children, and his wife had an independent income, otherwise the system would have been a little too expensive. On one occasion, all other plans having failed, he asked permission to return home “ on urgent private

affairs " from the other side of the world. He was only allowed to remain six weeks, and he had to pay his own passage home and his successor's passage out, but he said it was " well worth it." He did, however, suffer a passing pang of annoyance when he learnt, nearly a year later, that he must pay his successor's servant's passage in addition ; but, as he said cheerfully, " I never yet made a calculation without omitting one of the factors. If I add up a bill three times I am extremely lucky if I don't get more than two widely different results."

Johnny could live at peace with anyone and everyone except his landlord. Barring the fact that his rent was invariably paid before twelve o'clock on the day it was due, he had almost every fault that a tenant could possess. Early in his married life he formed the conviction that to have a house of his own was an indispensable part of a man's domestic happiness. His wife, a gentle, peace-loving woman, wearied of wrangles in which she frequently had the distress of knowing that Johnny was entirely to blame, and imagining that a suitable house was to be selected and bought, did much to encourage the idea. When she grasped that his intention was to buy land and build a house of his own design it was too late for her to draw back. Besides house-planning relieved her from the nightly *corvée* of card-playing. A young nephew once asked her if she

thought it wrong to play cards, and she replied with unusual vehemence: "I wish I did! Then I should never have to play any more."

Johnny's love of card playing bore no proportion to his ability and success. As a whist-player his demeanour was childlike, though scarcely bland. He had no confidence in the power of any card to win a trick except the ace of trumps, and even that he liked to "make" as early as possible. He felt a thrill of excitement when he laid down the king, even if the ace had been turned up by his own partner and there was good reason to believe that he had some small trumps. As for the rest of the suit, he thought nothing could be expected of them and flung them away with desperation. If a knave or a ten chanced to take a trick, he found it miraculous and "very hard lines" for his opponents. His favourite complaint was: "I never have a trump, never." "You must have one at any rate when you deal," objected the literal-minded Shaw. "I don't. I assure you I don't. We play *very* strict whist. Whenever I deal someone's sure to say they haven't the right number of cards, and then I lose my turn."

In Mrs. Elliott's eyes, however, cards had the negative merit of "not being quite as bad as backgammon," a game for which her husband had at one time a passion, excused by the fact that he "stood to win." The rattle of the dice



was music in his ears, the only form of music that really appealed to him being a drum-and-fife band. It was on record that one night when he closed the board at ten, after more than two hours' play, his wife said with mechanical amiability, hardly knowing whether she had lost or won, and much too tired to care: "You must give me my revenge to-morrow." "Dear, how selfish of me to leave off when I have won every rub! You shall have it *now*." He opened the board again, and they played till midnight.

"It is strange," said Mrs. Elliott quite innocently, "that I nearly always lose. Considering how much depends on chance I really ought to win oftener than I do." "D'you keep an eye on his points?" asked Langley drily. After that Johnny had such a long run of "bad luck" that he wearied of the game.

Shaw's attitude towards the house-building scheme a little surprised his friends. At Mrs. Elliott's earnest request he had spent many heated hours trying to prove to her husband that after seven years' dabbling in gold mines he had halved his capital and received an average of one per cent. interest on the remainder, and he therefore regarded the project with very mild reprobation. "After all, a house can't vanish, and he can live in it himself even if no one else can." He had tried to explain to his old schoolfellow that even a successful mining enterprise was not like industrial

businesses which might increase to an indefinite extent, that a mine at best was a fixed amount of property, and the only certainty concerning it was that the more you took out of it the less there remained to take; but he told his wife afterwards:

“When Elliott dies I shall be pleased to do anything I can, but this is *the* very last time I shall speak to him on business matters. I—I—have my own health to consider. It’s all very well for you to laugh, my dear, but a chain is no stronger than its weakest link. I had to walk ten miles before I got over it, carrying my hat nearly the whole way. He keeps every blessed document he possesses jumbled together in an old ditty-box under his bed, and he hadn’t even a list of his securities until I drew one up. Turning the box out is regular midshipman’s pleasure with him. He has only the vaguest idea of its contents, and as for finding any particular share-certificate, he couldn’t do it under three hours, and the effective five minutes would be put in by his wife. And the money he has muddled away!”

“I wonder he has any left.”

“’Tisn’t the same money. He has had three small fortunes already. He was always a favourite nephew and all that sort of thing. It’s—it’s—maddening. However, his wife has a proper settlement of her own money. I saw to that. He simply never thought of it, and she would have looked on blandly while he lost the last penny she possessed.

“A few of his investments are fairly sound, but he bought them at an enormous premium, and firmly believes that he gets the same return for his money as the original shareholders. He told me he was getting  $12\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. in one case, and 17 in another. When I worked it out it came to  $2\frac{1}{2}$  and  $3\frac{3}{4}$ . But he no more cares or understands than if he were twelve years old and working out imaginary stocks and shares which he could drop as soon as the clock struck. In fact he cares less, because there's no chance of a caning. All I say just goes in at one ear and out at the other. No, I will not talk business to him whatever happens.”

A few days later Johnny tested his resolution by telling him that even if he did drop a little money in gold mines it did not really matter, as it was always possible to live very comfortably in lodgings—“And then you pay no rates or taxes or servants' wages.” Shaw, mindful of his recent vow, contented himself with casting an expressive glance at Langley, who, thinking that thunder must certainly follow lightning, said hastily: “Don't throw facts before angels. It scares them: they think you are pitching stones. If Johnny likes to believe that landladies entertain him all for pure delight, what does it matter?”

Ten years before there was any likelihood of Johnny's retirement the land was bought. It was a piece of scrubby pasture with a fine view of the sea and, except that it was entirely without trees

and several hundred feet away from the road, there was not much to be said against it. All the proud owner's ready-money had been exhausted by the purchase, and he announced that he must "rest on his oars for a time."

Shaw, exhausted with trying to explain that to buy land years before you could use it and in a place where prices had probably reached high-water mark meant losing all the interest of your capital in the meantime, suggested: "At any rate you could get on with the garden. I mean as far as the trees and shrubs are concerned. If you had a hundred or so quick-growing things put in, they would be a decent size by the time you are ready to build. There is a good nursery-garden about a mile off. You had better ask for an estimate, including replanting and keeping an eye on the trees until they can hold their own. It wouldn't run you into very much."

Characteristically this was vetoed as a great extravagance. The trees would cost a fabulous sum and would die for want of "constant attention." He would rear the trees himself "from seeds and things." Shaw had about as much notion of the time it takes trees to grow as he had of the length of a butterfly's life, but after observing Johnny's method of husbandry he thought himself in a position to state with some confidence: "Things don't flourish if you keep pulling them up by the roots to see if they're growing."



Mrs. Elliott had a small greenhouse, or rather conservatory, which with much aid from the florist had always been gay with flowers, but henceforward it was devoted to the rearing of trees in pots. They were grown from cuttings taken in her husband's messmates' gardens, from orange pips, lemon pips, acorns, yewberries, cherry laurels, and horse-chestnuts. One of these last possessed the "will to live" to such an extraordinary degree that, aided by Johnny's absence for thirty-one months of the time, it actually reached the age of three years, was carefully conveyed by train and solemnly planted at the end of what was to be the lawn. Either some child trod on it, or a hungry rabbit ate it, at any rate it was never seen again. Some weeks later Mrs. Elliott took advantage of a flying voyage to the Pacific and had a few larches and poplars and Scotch firs planted, and Johnny on his next visit quite readily accepted them as the spontaneous gift of nature.

The next step was to build a lodge, in which a stout ex-coastguardman was established with orders to "bring on the garden." He worked industriously, but as the sole products were potatoes and cabbages, which he subsequently ate with the assistance of a couple of pigs and a large family, no permanent improvement to the property resulted, though that he professed to have "done wonders for the soil."

Johnny designed the lodge himself. It was chiefly drawn with the aid of a ruler, but it was a great success from the coastguardman's point of view. It contained two rooms seventeen feet square and about ten feet high, and three smaller ones, liberal accommodation in the way of larder and cupboards, a good entry, and quite a handsome staircase. Mrs. Elliott never saw the bills, and was so much pleased with the structure that she was more than half disappointed when Johnny announced with determined cheerfulness that their own house "must stand over for a year or two."

Just at the time when the house "was being taken seriously in hand" Mrs. Elliott had a long and severe illness, and although the plans were almost daily spread out on her bed, and although she did her best to visualise the building, she received no clear idea of its size, design, or aspect.

During the intervals of comparative freedom from pain some detached fact would recur to her mind with disconcerting vividness, and she was sharply conscious that one window was certainly too few for the drawing-room, and three were probably too many for the larder. But then, as she told herself reassuringly, nothing was drawn to scale; in real life the one window might fill the whole end of the room, and the three windows might be mere portholes; and although the window-frames all seemed to be almost touching the floor and four feet below the ceiling, there was no reason

why the position should not be reversed "when the builder had the plans in his own hands."

Once after a paroxysm of pain, which the doctor was watching with a sense of helplessness which thirty years' practice hardly enabled him to conceal, she opened her eyes and with apparent irrelevance asked him: "If the ground floor were ten feet high and the hall were a small square, could you put a straight flight of stairs there without making them *very* steep?" The doctor, who had been expecting a question impossible to answer and difficult to evade, replied with the cheerful frankness kept for strictly non-professional matters: "Not even if the staircase put its feet on the doorstep." She sighed heavily: "A castle in Spain is well enough—but when one has to walk up and down the stairs!"

But, after all, why should "poor Johnny's one pleasure" be spoilt by criticism? Even Langley sometimes lent an indulgent ear because "if it weren't for that blessed old house he would be fretting himself to fiddle-strings about his wife, and no one would have any peace, least of all herself."

The duty of making himself disagreeable fell, as usual, upon the conscientious Shaw. He had got hold of two very useful rules: windows should not equal more than a fourth or less than a tenth of the floor space, and a thousand feet of air per head must be allowed in each room in continuous occupation. Unluckily Johnny never grasped

the difference between superficial area and cubic contents for more than an hour at a time, and in his calculations he almost invariably confused them, and these excellent maxims bore strange fruit.

Shaw then made a few inquiries into the water supply, and learnt with dismay that the drinking-water had to be fetched from a spring three hundred yards away and accessible to cattle, and no underground rain-water tanks had been provided. "There's always the sea," said Johnny, which was undeniable, but not much to the point. The bath-room was to be supplied from a tank in the roof, which had to be filled every day by a pump. "Just a little wholesome exercise."

"Call it what you like," said Shaw impatiently, "but directly the rain-water runs short the boiler will burst. A nice thing to have on your conscience if it kills the cook!"

"It's only to have a cold supply."

"But what will you do in the winter? Even Byam used to let himself off a cold bath when the thermometer went below 36° F."

"He was always a faddy man. I believe in hardening. Why, I remember when I joined my first ship he made a point of sending his linen to the galley to be aired. How the fellows jeered!"

"Yes, and what's the result of it? Byam was the oldest man in the mess and you were the youngest, and you are as rheumatic as an old hedger and



ditcher, and all the rest are dead, and when I last saw Byam his wife's reel of cotton rolled under the table and he picked it up as easily as a boy."

"I dare say he swore at her for dropping it."

"He'd swear a jolly sight more if he were as rheumatic as you are," said Shaw, who thought a good moral must stick however you pointed it.

The house was practically finished before Mrs. Elliott was well enough to go and see it, and she had difficulty in masking her astonishment and dismay.

"I thought it would surprise you, Mary?" cried her husband delightedly.

"It does indeed," she said with sweet composure. "It's wonderful."

The house had been built on the lowest part of the ground, and faced due north. The only window from which a view of the sea could be obtained was in a small attic at the back of the house, and to obtain this glimpse conveniently it was necessary to sit on the floor. There was not a single good room in the house, and only two rooms exceeded eight feet four inches in height. The stairs were dark at midday, and nearly as steep as a companion-ladder. All the bedroom doors were so low that Mrs. Elliott, who was an inch or so taller than her husband, could not pass through them without bending her head, but he took a childish pleasure in the fact that every-one of them was provided with a brass knocker.

The larder faced south-west, and bore a strong family likeness to a home-made greenhouse. "Nice and airy," said Johnny complacently. The coalhouse was about two hundred feet from the kitchen door, and most conveniently placed for the ex-coastguardman, who achieved a popularity which was far from him when he lived like his neighbours on "a hundred and a half" per week.

Before the furniture was well in place, Langley and Shaw came fifty miles by train to make a tour of inspection. Luckily it never entered Johnny's mind that they could do anything but admire and envy; questions as to what would happen when water collected on the roof and shot through the skylight, or how fine gravel could be induced to stick on paths which sloped one in ten, passed for mere chaff.

"It's a nest of boxes," said Shaw as the train left the station, "and the drains are all nowhere."

Langley nodded gloomily. "And the sooner that bloated bluejacket is sent to the rightabout the better. Garrulous, thieving scoundrel! I shall write and tell him so."

"Accuse not a servant unto his master lest he curse thee."

"Most of the rooms you couldn't swing a cat in."

"What's more to the point, you couldn't swing a hammock. Even the two largest bedrooms are

so cut up by windows and doors and chimneys that a man of my size wouldn't be able to keep his head and his feet all out of the draught at the same moment."

"If another hundred or so were spent on the lodge it would be quite large enough for two people to live in quietly."

"For heaven's sake, don't tell him so. Remember the bear's grease. And if he doesn't live in that contraption, who *will*?"

Mrs. Elliott struggled valiantly against the manifold drawbacks and discomforts of the house, but the servants, put out of temper by the excessive dullness, gave but grudging support, and in the middle of the second year the doctor was obliged to tell Johnny what she would have died rather than acknowledge. Much to everyone's surprise he bore the news with unaffected cheerfulness, and put up a board, "TO BE LET OR SOLD," the printing of which he thoroughly enjoyed. Shaw most overbearingly insisted on turning the S's the right way round before they were inked in with an old toothbrush, but Johnny obstinately clung to his N's crossed from north-east to south-west, although loudly assured that they "looked for all the world like H's half-seas over."

The usual "small fortune" was spent in advertising the property, and it was finally sold for about two-fifths of what it had cost.

"And precious lucky to get as much," said

Shaw irritably. "If I had built a rabbit-warren like that I should have had to pay people to live in it, and if I had tried to sell it I should have found myself in gaol, and serve me right, too! Providence certainly does look after——"

"Well, in brief, after Johnny," interrupted Langley, "but don't be envious—probably it is on his wife's account. I was telling her the other day about little Nothink's literal belief in guardian angels, and she said: 'I hope poor Johnny has *two*. One would find it overmuch work.' I told her of a fat, idle parson I had heard assuring a harassed, lower middle-class congregation that 'Heaven meant a twenty-four hours' working day.' She said she did not wish to go where there was no more sea, but where there was no more *tide*."

"When the house was under weigh I did my best to advise Elliott, until one day he had the cheek to tell me that the foreman had said, 'Never show an unfinished building to a fool or a gentleman.' After that I let him gang his ain gait. And this is the end of it!"

"Not nearly as bad an end as it might have been. But nothing ever equals his hopes or your fears."

The money was spent in buying a compact, well-situated house which thoroughly satisfied Shaw's commonsense requirements, but he shook his head ominously over the length of the garden.

"What possible harm can it do?" asked Langley.



“It’s just long enough to keep the neighbours off—the only good a garden ever is, as far as I’m concerned. A garden like the one he had at the rabbit-warren begins by being an amusement, then it’s an occupation, and before you know where you are it’s an infernal nuisance. But a mere strip of town garden—I defy even Johnny to waste a pound a week over it. My wife runs hers for about five shillings.”

“Wait till he has a little spare money and you’ll see.”

Three years later the long, over-shadowed strip of garden had four hundred pounds’ worth of glass houses. The ex-coastguardman was growing tomatoes and grapes, and Johnny was growing wiser—at about the same rate.

“What idiot was it,” asked Langley, “who spoke of counting peaches on the garden wall as a soothing occupation? I don’t think our guileless Nathaniel’s character will stand much more of it! Shades of the forcing-house begin to close upon the growing boy.”

## VI. A SWEARING ANACHRONISM

A survival—*Messieurs et Mesdames*—A striking tribute—A hero at home—Domestic discipline—Compulsory music—Retreat and defeat—Family history—Examinations—What stood in his light—Lower-deck discipline—A fair start—Poetry and prose—When wives were wives—An answer to prayer

JOHN BLISSETT was the youngest of the group by six or eight years, but in some respects he belonged to an older generation. Heseltine one day called him an anachronism.

“A *swearing* anachronism,” said Langley. Shaw referred to Smollett, while Byam’s five-word life-history is scarcely fit for ears polite.

Blissett was famed for the strength of his language ; its chief peculiarity being the ludicrously frequent interpolation of the great big D. Whether he gossiped peaceably with his wife, teased the children who came to him so late in life, entertained a scandalised chaplain-general or an appreciative royal prince, the word ran in and out like a thread which had no connection with the design.

At a banquet given in honour of a European sovereign he was called on to make a speech, and as he knew nothing of French it was arranged that his secretary, a native of Jersey, should stand

beside him at the critical moment and dictate two or three words at a time.

The ceremony began, and in heavy English-French the secretary mouthed out "Messieurs et Mes-dames." The unwilling orator stood silent and erect, an expression of affected horror creeping slowly from his eyes to his chin.

"*Messieurs et Mesdames*" repeated the secretary with nervous emphasis. A loud aside from the admiral:

"Hold hard, Blaqueney! Remember the ladies."

Towards the close of his life he was taking a tour through Cornwall with his daughter, and one Sunday afternoon they passed a village church just as the service began. She expressed a wish to attend, and he continued his walk, telling her that he would be back in time for the sermon. From early childhood she had been scandalised by his behaviour in church, and on a recent occasion he had made the clearly audible comment: "D—d if I believe that! Do you, my dear?" and she sincerely hoped that he would be too late.

The sermon began, and the peace of the atmosphere was destroyed by a sense of tension, which seemed to be shared by those around her. She glanced uneasily at the open west door, and there stood her father, bolt upright and with his binoculars levelled at the pulpit. He stood motionless until the concluding words were uttered, replaced

the binoculars smartly in their case, ejaculating with cordial approval : " And a d—d good sermon, too ! "

After listening to his daughter's remonstrance and to her assurance that everyone in the church had heard what he said, he strode after the vicar and apologised, returning wholly impenitent. " He didn't care a d—n, my dear. D—d if he didn't take it for a compliment."

For ten years she was his chief companion, and certainly found no difficulty in filling up her time. It took four months to get him a suit of clothes, and even then she only succeeded in getting them worn by wrapping his old coat round a dead parrot and burying it. He insisted on having it dug up again, but the weather was hot, and his obstinacy could not carry him to the last point. It took a year to dissuade him from lending his name to bogus companies which were rapidly reducing his small private means to a cipher, and nearly twice as long to induce him to be " dry-docked for repairs at a dentist's." I saw him soon after the long-delayed business had been completed.

" How d'you like my head-rails ? " he asked. " No, no ; above the water-line. The lower tier's my own. D—d clever fellow that dentist. He pulls teeth out d—d well. D—n me, my dear, if it wasn't a pleasure to let him do it. And I told him so. Didn't I, my dear ? " turning to his daughter for confirmation.



“ Among other things,” she replied drily. “ He must have thought us ‘ a pair of very strange beasts.’ If I had not been a little eccentric myself he would have been quite overcome by pity for my sad fate as your sole visible guardian.”

Blissett had been twice promoted for gallantry, once displayed under ordinary broad daylight, drum-and-trumpet conditions, and once alone, unarmed, and in the dead of night he had exposed himself to imminent risk of hideous torture in order to gain information that might perhaps reduce the next day’s death-roll. When he was well over fifty his little daughter had measles, and his abject fear of contracting the disease and the strange nature of his precautions made him the laughing-stock of the whole neighbourhood.

When still a very young man, Blissett and his boat’s crew were on one occasion hard pressed by the enemy. The captain, unable to send immediate support, gave the signal for retreat. Blissett’s attention was called to it, but he shouted angrily: “ D—n it! Turn a blind eye!” and continued operations which in a few minutes’ time were completely successful. On returning to the ship the captain met him with the suave comment: “ The next time you hold it advisable to act in defiance of my orders, Mr. Blissett, may I suggest that you should moderate your voice ? ” He always maintained that his reply was a quotation from Marryat: “ Duty before decency, sir.”

Although he allowed more license to his juniors than was usual, Blissett had his own methods of administering a telling reproof if any advantage was taken of his unconventionality. One day in a dockyard church he was sitting in the next pew to his officers, the whole party in uniform. A lieutenant of five or six and twenty, seeing a collection most unexpectedly under weigh, leant across and coolly asked for the loan of some money. Without an instant's visible hesitation Blissett put two fingers in his waistcoat pocket, and drawing out a new sovereign handed it over with wooden impassivity of countenance. The young fellow flushed to the roots of his hair, but in spite of the malicious smiles of his messmates he had the sense and pluck not to give money that he could not afford. He let the bag pass, and as soon as the service was over returned the sovereign with an apology, which was accepted with a grim smile. Another day Blissett went into an Officers' Reading-room, and although he was in full uniform a midshipman occupied and retained the only arm-chair. He said nothing at the time, but made inquiries as to the delinquent's name and ship, and the next time the lad tried to go ashore he discovered that his leave had been stopped for an inconveniently long period. He knew better than to ask why !

The Sunday after he was appointed to his first command Blissett, prepared to read morning

service to the whole ship's company, discovered that eleven men were absent, and inquired the reason.

"They say they're Roman Catholics, sir."

"A large proportion aboard such a small craft. Irishmen? North country?"

"No, sir; London and west country." A glance of intelligence passed between the two men, and Blissett announced in stentorian tones: "Church of England service will begin in thirty-five seconds. A Roman Catholic service will be held this afternoon at two o'clock. It will be twice as long—OR MORE."

Conversion took place with the needful rapidity.

Domestic discipline was very lax. One day his little daughter declined to wear a pinafore that her mother had made in some new but unattractive fashion. She persisted in the refusal, and when her father roared angrily, "I'll be d—d if you don't," retorted calmly, "I'll be d—d if I *do*!" He was so much shocked that he suddenly changed the charge of disobedience to lawful orders to one of "swearing at your poor mother." By the time she had explained that if she had sworn at anyone it was "only" at himself the storm had blown over.

The child had but one defect, in his opinion: she had no ear for music, and was literally unable to distinguish "Rule Britannia" from "The Girl I left Behind Me." As soon as she grew a little

older he insisted on a great deal of time being given to "exercise on the pianoforte," and was amazed at the result. "But I have no ear," she would plead. "D—n it, what d'you want of an ear? You've learnt the alphabet, and you can read. You've learnt the notes, and why the devil can't you play?"

He neither liked nor disliked other people's young children, but his power of attraction for them was curiously strong, and as he found their presence no restraint he tolerated it to a degree quite unusual in naval men. His chief charm in their eyes was that he seemed wholly unconscious that they differed from their elders in anything but size. Also, he said and did with apparent gusto a larger proportion of the things that they would have liked to say and do than is usual with grown-up people.

There was one exception to his general tolerance: he detested some exceedingly well-brought-up children who lived next door to him when he was on half-pay, and in spite of their persevering efforts to attract his attention he persisted in ignoring their existence. One afternoon he was returning from a levee in exceedingly bad humour. There was no carriage-drive, and he had to stride up the path with cocked-hat and sword, gold-striped trousers, and coat embroidered with laurel leaves, in full view of his worshipping neighbours. A polite little voice began: "How are you to-day, Admiral Blissett?" No reply.



“ How is Mrs. Blissett ? ”

“ How is Adela ? ”

He reached the steps in grim silence, mounted them three at a time, and was fumbling with the latchkey when a fourth inquiry reached him :

“ How is Reggie to-day ? ”

The key stuck : he turned at bay, and shouted in tones that should have dispersed half a street full of children :

“ How’s your grandmother ! ”

Polite, excited, triumphant chorus :

“ She’s quite well, thank you ! ”

“ D—delighted to hear it,” said the defeated admiral. Safe inside the hall with the door well slammed, he gave a roar of laughter which carried away the last vestige of ill-humour.

“ Little beggars, they won the day ! D—d if I knew they had a grandmother.”

One of Blissett’s brothers held a good position in the War Office, one was in the Admiralty, a third was in the army, and his sisters married well, but he loved to talk of “ My poor old father who hadn’t a second coat to his back. We ran barefoot half our time, and when there *was* any duff we turned our one plate upside down.” In earlier versions the garment in question had had a different name and served a different purpose, but ten years’ persistent “ John, I *wish* you would not ! ” had not been wholly resultless.

“ There was never any luck in our family,” he

complained. "My grandfather was a half-pay commander with eleven children. An old mess-mate offered to take my father as a midshipman, but he said, 'Hang it all, I've had enough of honour and glory. I want to make him a pusser.' The port admiral heard of it, and said, 'Send the boy up to me after dinner, and tell him to bring his copy-book.' So my father went. 'And did you write this yourself, my boy? And d—d well written, too! Tell your father it's all right.'

"Not much worry about examinations in those days. If you had the right kind of a name they made tender inquiries after your uncle's health, and if you hadn't they asked how you spelled believe and receive. If they didn't like the look of you they told you to write Mediterranean or Mesopotamia, and said you had made an awful hash of it and that you didn't know B from a bull's foot, and they were d—d if it was their business to teach you.

"But it brought no luck. Before my father was old enough to have a look-in, I'm d—d if picking and stealing and ullages and ten-upon-eight and all that little game wasn't put a stop to, and pussers had to take their pay and live on it. And it was awfully against me as a youngster. If ever I scowled when I ought to have smiled, or vice versa, it was all because my father was a purser.

"The real truth was that he had a devil of a

temper—till my mother came alongside and knocked it out of him—and my grandfather was afraid to put him in the executive. He thought that if he had a sword in his hand he'd play Balaam with the first ass he met. But an angry man can always find a weapon. He hadn't been three days aboard when he cracked the paymaster over the wrist with a ruler. There was the devil and all to pay, but things weren't managed by hard and fast rules, and it blew over.

"There are not many people living now who have ever been shipmates with a real purser. It used to be said, 'It's no sin to rob a pusser,' but some of them were most d—d gentlemanly fellows. I remember one—most polished fellow I ever met, and awfully kind to youngsters. Everybody loved him. He drew £1600 a year and never did a stroke of work. He had a steward who did all the doubtful business for him.

"Ah, those were the days! They marched the bullocks whole out of the victualling-yards. Then came the time when the beef went away in quarters over the ship's side, especially vessels where there were heaps of boys content to let themselves be robbed for a few sweets. I saw a fellow hauled up before the captain for carrying two or three gallons of spirits ashore. All he did to him was to stop two goes of leave. D—d if they wouldn't hang a man who did such a thing nowadays.

"And I remember one of the first of the real

paymasters. He was Hawtrey's father's secretary. He was an awfully handsome fellow, and had the cheek of ten thousand donkeys. I've often known him ashore of a morning lounging about and thinking who he'd propose to next while the admiral was in his office and up to his eyes in work. If a man had a secretary like that now he'd smother him. Why, you can't deal out the smallest punishment to a man without so much clerical work that it would be a great deal better to give a general order to the crew: 'D—n it; do as you like and have done with it!' The days when any fool could be a paymaster are over."

Blissett at all times clung to nautical idioms. On his knees in church he once discovered that his Prayer Book was missing, and gave the order to his daughter: "Directly you go home, pipe all hands and search for my Prayer Book. I'm d—d if I can find my places in any other." In the afternoon he sometimes went for a drive with his wife and children. With imaginary steering-gear in his hands he would look quickly round the carriage and ask, "All aboard? Shove off, then!" and he insisted on following the same etiquette as if he were in a boat—that is to say, he must be the last to get in and the first to alight.

He was remarkably tall for a sailor of that period, and held himself very much like the fabled commander who believed that he had a glass



back. His hair was prematurely grey and stood on end. His eyes were hazel, and when he joined the service they were shaded by lashes so excessively long and thick that they excited a storm of ridicule in the gun-room, scarcely to be held in check by a ready tongue and a still more ready pair of brown fists. The jeers were short-lived. The first time he tried to look through a spy-glass he found it obscured by dark lines, and speedily discovered the cause. He exclaimed, "D—n my eyelashes!" found a minute looking-glass and a pair of nail-scissors, and cut them off close to the lids. They never again reached even the normal masculine length, and there was nothing to attest the truth of the anecdote but a miniature painted before he left home.

In spite of his superficial roughness Blissett, unlike only too many of his contemporaries, was absolutely free from the vice of cruelty. As a lieutenant he fought long and dangerous battles to save his men from arbitrary and excessive punishment, and as a captain he never but once sentenced a prisoner to be flogged, and then it was with the full determination that the sentence should not be carried out. He knew a better plan.

The prisoner was a notorious bully, and had acquired a most pernicious influence over a large number of the crew owing to the general belief in his enormous physical strength. The warrant was signed by the admiral and the hateful

preparations were duly made, but at the last moment, acting on secret instructions, the doctor stepped forward and, saluting Blissett, gravely assured him that the prisoner's constitution was too feeble to bear the shock of corporal punishment. From that moment the man's influence was gone, and his mutinous speeches were received with scoffs and contumely. To provoke punishment that he could not endure violated the lower-deck code of honour.

Throughout a very long commission Blissett's second in command, one Lafferty, was a man who snored stupendously. Blissett often boasted that for three years he had slept over a gun that was fired at daybreak, and that after a few weeks the report had ceased to wake him; but he soon found to his cost that an explosion when he was already asleep, and a series of small explosions when he was trying to go to sleep, were very different in their nervous effect.

One night in harbour Lafferty was unusually quick in turning in, and the snores promptly began and continued until Blissett was beside himself with irritation. Wrenching open his cabin door, he told the sentry to "go and see if the commander is asleep; and if he isn't, tell him I should like to speak to him."

From early experience he knew the precise manner in which such an order would be carried out. The sentry hammered loudly at the door

with the butt-end of his musket and, as soon as he heard Lafferty yawn and sigh, cried in a voice fit to wake the Seven Sleepers: "The captain doesn't wish to disturb you, sir, but if you're awake he'd like to speak to you." Blissett waited on his door-sill until some articulate reply was forthcoming and then shouted: "Don't turn out, Lafferty. D—n it, all I want to say is—*Let's start fair.*" He flung himself back into his berth, and was asleep before Lafferty had grasped his meaning.

Blissett had enemies, but very few. One of them had contrived by secret influence to deprive him of an official residence and then ventured to condole with him publicly. "I'm afraid you must feel rather sore about it. A most awful nuisance when you thought you had another eighteen months clear."

"Feel, my dear fellow? I feel like Adam and Eve when they were turned out of the garden of Eden. And d—n me if I don't know who the angel Gabriel is!"

When he told the story at dinner some years later, Heseltine ventured on a correction: "The rabbis believe that Gabriel was solely employed on works of mercy. I think you must mean Michael."

"D—n it, I don't. I'm a Christian," he retorted with decided irrelevance.

"I suppose Milton was a Christian too, though I should hardly call him one," said his wife.

"Milton?"

"Yes. Did you ever hear of him?"

"I bet you I know a d—d sight more about Milton than any man within hail, bar Heseltine."

"What do you know?"

"He had a lot of wives, and he wanted to have a lot more, but I'm not quite clear whether he meant to ship them all at once or one at a time. I'm rather inclined——"

"Leave out the wives, John. Tell us about his poetry."

"You've pulled me up with a run just as I was getting into the swing of it. The sum and substance about his writings is this: When he was a youngster he took pains and wrote poetry quite as well as anyone else. When he grew old and surly, he said he'd be d—d if he'd find any more rhymes to his reasons. People could take it or leave it. And I leave it. What's the use of poetry unless you want to sing? If there is any sense in it, it is worth more as prose, and if there isn't, make pipe-lights of it."

"You prefer prose?" asked Heseltine, secretly astonished that Blissett was so much in advance of Monsieur Jourdain.

"Poetry and prose to my mind are like salt meat and fresh. If beef is good, why salt it? If it is bad, why eat it?"

"I doubt if you have ever read any books except *Peter Simple* and *Handy Andy*," said his wife.



“I bet you I’ve read as much as Shaw, and you don’t find fault with him.”

“Shaw was taught to read out of *Æsop’s Fables*,” said Heseltine, “and he says he has never learnt anything since. He has only been verifying the facts.”

“And I learnt to read out of the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, and you can’t verify ’em. The fifth volume. I was the fifth child.”

“I do not see the connection,” said Heseltine with some hesitation.

“Shows how much you know of the wear and tear of teaching a boy to read when he doesn’t want to learn! My poor mother——”

“Indeed I do pity her, John dear. Her arm must often have ached.”

“Not a bit of it! She wasn’t a woman to keep a dog and do the barking herself. She looked out that my father always had home appointments, and took jolly fine care that he rope’s-ended us all round twice a week. The poor old boy was almost as anxious to shirk it as we were, but it was no go. If ever he was ordered abroad she took the next coach to London, went straight to the Admiralty, and had the appointment cancelled. Once they told her he must either go to China or go on half-pay indefinitely, as there wasn’t another home billet in existence. She found a vessel that was just going to be broken up for firewood, and made them commission her. When the captain was

appointed, his wife went to my mother in tears—they were cousins, and my mother had always bullied her—and said her husband had served in the rotten old craft when he was a mate, and even then you could have rammed a walking-stick through any part of her hull. My mother said that if she made herself disagreeable about it she would take d—d good care that her d—d old Queen's hard-bargain never had another billet. And then——”

“John, your mother would no more have dreamed of saying such a thing than I should. She was most religious.”

“I should just about think so! It would have been more than your life was worth to say she wasn't. Well, my poor old cousin went on like the importunate widow, and at last my mother said she'd consult the hydrographer and have the old boat moored in one of the safest reaches in the shallowest river he could find. They did her up with tin tacks and brown paper and a couple of coats of paint, and she lasted six years and nine months. I believe she would have lasted seven, but two young fools in a dinghy ran foul of her one foggy morning and stove her side in. She sank in three minutes and twenty-five seconds.”

“Indeed!” said the unsuspecting Heseltine. “I should hardly have thought that a wooden vessel. Did many men lose their lives?”

“D—d few. Considering that hardly any of 'em could swim.”

“ And your cousin’s husband ? ”

“ Wasn’t aboard. He lived ashore and his wife never let him come down till the day was well aired. All the papers were sent up to his house to be signed. Simpson ! ”—turning to the imperturbable marine in plain clothes who waited at table—“ Simpson ! Who made this mustard ? ”

“ I did, sir.”

“ Make some more like it, and *go* ! What were you saying, dear ? ”

Mrs. Blissett, half audibly, had been making a calculation. “ John, you were the *sixth* child.”

“ Damn it, so I was ! But it was the fifth volume all the same. Two of us were twins, and they managed on the fourth volume between them. Tom held the book, and Mary turned over the leaves and did as much of the pointing as he would stand. Thought you’d caught me out, eh ? ”

“ It must have been a fine edition,” said Heseltine regretfully. Mine had only two volumes. I bought it out in Rio for nine shillings and sixpence.”

“ And I broke the back of one of them slinging it at young Carter’s head. Not Charity : the one who came to grief. If I hadn’t missed—What d’you suppose it weighed ? ”

“ About four pounds.”

“ Gad—a narrow shave.”

“ You don’t take much rope to hang yourself,

John. Confess, wasn't that the first and only time you ever handled a volume of Gibbon ? ”

“ Liars always are found out, whichever way they whirl about.”

“ Ah ! that is much more the kind of literature you were brought up on.”

“ I think we all were,” said Heseltine, smiling. “ I recollect being stood on a chair to recite ‘ I thank you, pretty cow.’ It went a long way towards perverting my moral sense. I loathed milk, and I was horribly afraid of cows and thought them hideous.”

“ I believe my husband is afraid of them still.”

“ And if anyone says they aren't, I *don't* believe 'em. Shaw and I met one the other day, and we went down a side-road at a double. He says cows won't listen to commonsense, but I'm d—d if he gave her a chance ! Of course if you say you're not afraid of them, my dear, I'm bound to believe you. All I know is that if twenty years ago I'd asked *you* to go up and bully the Second Lord into giving me an appointment out of my turn, you'd have been in a blue funk.”

“ I could have given the hall-porter five shillings and run away. I am quite sure that is all you ever did.”

“ I'm d—d if I gave him more than half a crown. Even at that rate he raked in the shekels a good deal faster than I ever could.”

As a rule Blissett was well served by his



subordinates, and an extraordinarily large proportion of his "youngsters" lived to hoist their flag, but he once had an exasperatingly incapable first-lieutenant. He was on his knees in his cabin early one morning when the young man burst in, crying excitedly, "Sir, sir!"

Blissett leapt to his feet: "Who the devil sent for you, sir? How dare you break in on my devotions? D—d impertinence!"

"Sir, the mail is in, and my cousin is drowned, and I've succeeded to the title; and I'm wanted in England at once, sir."

Blissett clasped his hands and raised them above his head dramatically:

"The Lord be praised: my prayers are heard! I'd made up my mind that sooner than go to sea with you again I'd sit on the doorstep at the Admiralty until they consented to promote you. You may be a fool, but you're a d—d good-natured fellow, and I said to myself I'm d—d if I wouldn't sooner kick you up the ladder than down."

## VII. CLEMENT URBANUS

The power of a name—A stand-outer—Confidences—Sabbatarianism—Missionaries—Brotherly feeling—Backing bills—A hyæna and a rat—The lower deck—Mutiny—Modern discipline

“**W**HAT’S in a name? Everything’s in a name,” said Langley dogmatically. “I grant you that a John or a William can do pretty well as they choose: there are too many of them to be coerced by public opinion; but if parents go beyond that they ought to be precious careful. I had a messmate once and he said to his mother: ‘When I was a miserable little shaver, helpless enough to move the heart of a stone, you went and called me Joshua, and as long as I live I’ll never forgive you.’ He came to no good; he was bound to be resentful and pugnacious, and no one was bound to put up with it. When he married his wife started calling him Jock, and it must have done him *some* good, because he was the only fellow I ever knew who was turned out of the service twice. I mean he never would have had a second chance if it hadn’t been for her. And, look at Benjamin Byam! How could a Benjamin ever remember that those on watch must be

served first ? The necessity is laid on him to keep his eye on the main chance, and to demand five rations to his brethren's one. And then there's Franks. How could a Clement be anything but urbane ? Of course there's *some* room left for individuality. Franks puts more backbone into the name than we're strictly entitled to. He's a regular stand-outer. A Clement pure and simple would play cards 'for love,' and read 'religious' novels, and go to 'moral' plays, and tolerate 'quiet' Sabbath-breaking, and look on at billiards while other fellows played, and have a perceptible dash of the backbiter in his composition. What was his father's name, Shaw ? ”

“ Gascoigne.”

“ H'm. Doesn't account for anything. Morally speaking it's a weak-kneed sort of name. And his grandfather's ? ”

But for once Shaw was nonplussed.

“ I've known him on and off for thirty-seven years, and I only know his father's name was Gascoigne because I was one of the witnesses when he married, and I saw it on the certificate. His wife told me who one of his ancestors was, and that's all I know of his family history.”

“ At any rate you always contrive to know more than anyone else.”

“ Well, I don't do it by asking questions,” retorted Shaw irritably ; and kept to himself the remaining piece of information derived from a

casual glance at the certificate twenty years previously, namely, that Franks' name was also Gascoigne, though it never appeared in the Navy List or in his ordinary signature.

"I suppose people 'confide' in you," said Langley, on provocation bent. "I'm thankful to say I have only received two confidences in the whole course of my life."

"What were they?" asked Shaw naïvely.

"Shows what you understand by a confidence! However, it was a good many years ago; even you won't be able to put two and two together. A man told me exactly how long it took him to transfer his affections from a lady who didn't want them to a lady who did."

"Inside of thirty-six hours—or never?"

"Perhaps people do confide in you sometimes. I never believed it before. I thought you practised 'a kind of conjectural sagacity and rash dexterity.' All the same, you can't guess this: a woman told me exactly how she felt towards a very respectable person who had been exceedingly good to her children when she was too ill to look after them herself. Give it up? She simply hated her; she even felt angry with the children for looking strong and well-dressed."

Shaw appeared puzzled and slightly shocked at such strange perversity:

"But my wife——"

"My dear fellow, if a man's wife weren't different



from every other man's, what a bore she would be ! ”

This was a wide subject for reflection, but Langley's thoughts soon veered round to the man under discussion :

“ I always thought he would have come to grief over Sabbatarianism, but his religion became broader as he grew older : it generally does if the roots run deep. The Fourth Commandment wrecked the career of three very good fellows of about his standing.”

“ And much smarter officers than *he* ever was. I've often wondered what became of them : I lost the run of them directly they left the service. They all commuted. I wrote to one of them, and pointed out that if he didn't even take the trouble to keep his name on the Navy List his widow would lose her pension. The year after I saw it was restored, but he never answered the letter.”

“ I can tell you what became of Leigh. He was the smartest of the lot, and a fellow of good family, too, and I dare say it's a fair sample. He was a sort of home-missioner in a gone-down suburb. My wife got let in for some working-parties—rather a fish out of water, because when she works she works, and she doesn't see the fun of sewing a sleeve in upside down one week and inside out the next—and she met his wife, a kind, dowdy little woman, who found her rather a fearful joy, and she said that as he was an old shipmate we ‘ ought ’ to call

on them. I knew it wouldn't answer, but I took her. They lived in a house called Prospect Villa : cemetery in front, railway behind, infant school on one side, and the fag-end of a row of bankrupt shops on the other. It was a bitter day, several degrees below zero, and they kept us on the doorstep until my wife shook with cold. I wanted to push our cards into the letter-box and go, but she said she could hear them scuttling about inside. At last a scared-looking maid with her toes through her boots opened the door and let us in to a vault where a fire had just that moment been lighted—and for the first time that winter, judging by the smell. Leigh came in, looking for all the world like an out-of-work nonconformist minister, and his wife and a girl about sixteen. We talked diligently about the weather, and I got my wife away as quickly as possible, for the room spelt bronchitis and sciatica. 'Well,' she said when we were safe outside, 'I'd trim my bonnet on Sunday if I wanted to, and if I knew how, but I'm hanged if I'd risk people's lives rather than own I hadn't a fire in my drawing-room. And it's simply tragic to see that girl : she might be the daughter of a lawyer's clerk. And where are the tracts you promised me?' There was only one. He had slipped it into my pocket when he was opening the hall door for us."

"What was it about? Against drunkenness, or gambling, or any other of your known habits?" asked Shaw.

“ Nothing of the sort. It was one of a series of tracts specially written for respectable members of the professional classes. It described the ‘conversion’ of a thoroughly worthy and hard-working Anglican clergyman, a man who was ‘a good citizen, a good father, husband, son, neighbour, and friend; but what is *that*, my brethren, in the sight of God?’ ”

“ How can you read such infernal twaddle ? ”

“ My dear fellow, I can no more resist reading a tract or a preface than you can look at a man without calculating his expectation of life and deciding whether he is more or less a fool than his father’s cousin who made such a hash of things out in China. From the time I was seven years of age I have read every tract thrown in my path. I have only come across two worth reading, and one preface. Timothy wrote the preface, and it is short enough even for an impatient man like yourself: ‘Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.’ ”

“ Well, at any rate Leigh did not become a missionary.”

“ To you a missionary is like a red rag to a bull. You should be more tolerant. The other day I was going a short journey on one of those as-you-like-it joint-railways where the guard says ‘Right!’ when he has finished talking to his wife’s cousin, and the engine-driver goes ahead if he happens to hear him. We were delayed at one station a little longer

than usual, and I looked out to see who was responsible. Quite a little crowd was seeing off a young missionary, and when they had finished kissing him he got into my carriage; and I recognised him as a barber's assistant. He had always cut my hair very decently, so I said to him: 'Let me give you one piece of advice, young man: never walk in the sun on an empty stomach, and you'll live to come home again.' Oh, some of them are honest enough!"

"Yes; I met one once. It was out in China. After dinner I said to him: 'How many converts have you made?' 'Close on two hundred.' 'Are they all genuine?' 'Well, I have always been doubtful about two of them.' 'And you are sure of all the rest?' '*Quite* sure.' The words may be open to two meanings—but the expression on the man's face wasn't."

Clement Franks, to sum up more quickly than his old messmates were disposed to, was the direct descendant of a judge famed for his piety, economy, and humanity. He entered the navy at sixteen, a tall, grave studious lad, with the foundations of a good classical education, but totally ignorant of arithmetic and of all modern geographical knowledge. Some sudden change in his destiny must have taken place. It cannot have been by his own wish that he found himself one of twenty members of a gun-room mess "with room for ten and food for fifteen," but he made no



complaints and no confidences, and in a marvellously short time occupied much the same position that he held throughout his entire service career. He was "nothing of an officer," but his superiors never told him so, and somehow or other any gaps in the performance of his duty were always filled up or overlooked.

Franks was loved, believed in, consulted, and admired, but seldom consciously imitated. It was said that in the forty years of his service life he had never been known to swear or drink spirits, that he had never borrowed money and never refused to lend any sum that he could afford to lose, and that he had never flattered a popular shipmate or irritated a cantankerous one. He rarely sat in judgment, but one of his shipmates, a notorious gossip, said of him: "He's a most libellous fellow: people believe every word he says, and more too. If a man can say, 'Why, even Clement Urbanus calls him this or that,' it is all up with the fellow's reputation."

Franks belonged to the early evangelical school, and although pressure of circumstances made him give a wide interpretation to "works of necessity," all Sunday amusements and almost all voluntary occupations were anathema. To write a letter to his wife, to read any book but the Bible or some arid volumes which professed to be concerned with its interpretation, would have been the darkest sin. Even on week days legitimate amusements

were few in number. Theatres, dancing, novel-reading, billiards, and card-playing were alike forbidden. Notwithstanding the strictness of his opinions and practice, he was greatly loved by many of his old messmates' children. Often when he made an unexpected evening call the cards were hastily flung under the table, lest his feelings should be wounded and fears for their "future" aroused.

One day he heard Shaw making his favourite boast that he had "lived on his pay from the day he joined the service."

"No," said Franks gently but with great decision; "it is impossible to live on your pay. No one has ever done it."

Shaw stuttered with astonishment at an assertion that could so easily be refuted, but Franks quietly continued :

"Either one must have a great deal more than one's pay, or else have a wife, or a mother, or a sister, who needs every penny of it that can possibly be spared. I have known good men and successful men in both these positions, but there is no middle course.

"In spite of all the quarrels and jealousies, and there were more grounds for them than there ever will be again, there was more brotherly spirit in the navy in the old days. No pay was handled until the end of a commission, however long it might be, but while one man in a mess had money

no one went without. They had not even to ask for it. I have often known fellows come into the messroom and say : ‘ I’ve just had a draft : who wants any ? Come on, now’s your time ! ’

“ I remember when a former shipmate of mine was tried by court-martial for losing his ship. I was prisoner’s friend, and although the case looked black at one time he got off with a reprimand. But the law is, or at any rate was then, that if a man is found guilty, in however small a degree, of causing the loss of his ship, he receives no compensation for his personal losses. Everything he had was twenty fathoms under water—uniform, books, instruments, even his watch and chain and cash-box. He had nothing but what he was wearing when the ship struck, and he was four thousand miles away from home.”

“ If he had been next door they couldn’t have raised twenty pounds to save him from being hanged,” muttered the all-knowing Shaw.

“ He asked me to back a bill for him, but my father had made me take a solemn oath the day I entered the navy that I would never do it for anyone, and I had my poor sister to think of, and I was engaged to be married.” (Shaw gave a nod of ratification. He himself had brought the eleven years’ engagement to a calmly happy conclusion by advising Franks to spend an unexpected legacy in buying an annuity for the chronic invalid, whom he had decided to be “ as hard as nails,” and had composed

the letter asking the patient fiancée to “trust to my pay while I live and your pension when I die.”)

“He was such an awfully unpopular fellow there was no one else he could ask. Well, just as I was thinking that perhaps I ought not to let my promise stand in his light, and yet how my father used to say that he’d been—that he’d known—hundreds of fellows ruined by backing bills, and devil a one had they saved” (Shaw noted the slip and the unconscious quotation, and with the silent passion of a collector finally labelled the long-deceased Gascoigne Franks), “and I was getting desperately worried over the whole business, when I had a note from a fellow who had been at daggers drawn with him since they were mates. It contained a cheque for thirty guineas, and just three lines: ‘He must be precious hard up. Do the best you can with this. It’s not a loan, and it’s anonymous.’ It gave me courage to ask two or three other fellows, and with fifty pounds he managed until his agent was willing to make him an advance.

“And people talk a good too much about the selfishness and brutality and arbitrary conduct of the captains. Of course there was a good deal of it, but there were men at both extremes. I remember one ship where we were frightfully overcrowded and the captain had three cabins, one of them not even furnished. A young fellow who had no cabin at all, though strictly speaking he was



entitled to one, was dangerously ill, and for weeks he had to lie in his hammock in a regular gangway. Then, on the other hand I knew a ship where one of the junior officers got yellow fever. He was a young fellow of no family and rather disagreeable temper. Well, the captain had only one cabin, but he sent for the carpenter, had a partition run up, and gave him half. Many men would have gone a thousand miles, and paid their own travelling expenses, rather than do it."

Franks professed to care nothing for animals, but he was constantly saddled with pets that the owner was parting with "through no fault of their own." Destruction of life was a terrible thing in his eyes, and it was well known that he would always yield to the ultimatum: "Then it will have to be thrown overboard."

One of the most troublesome of these pets was a hyæna of such tender age that it had to be fixed in a sponge-basket lined with flannel while it was fed from the spout of a small teapot. When it grew older it always appeared at afternoon tea, an early custom, if not an invention of sailors, and no charge could be brought against its behaviour beyond a general superciliousness of manner, which turned to an angry glare at anyone who approached Franks too closely or who seemed to be contradicting him. A recently appointed doctor, however, unsoftened by recollections of the animal in the sponge-basket stage of its

existence, observed with some uneasiness that its manner at dinner-time had less repose, and persuaded its indulgent master that it would be happier in a menagerie, "a prison *without* the chance of being drowned."

A still more undesirable pet lived with him day and night for eighteen months, but for this infliction none of his friends were responsible. Late one evening, just after he had turned in, he heard an awful squeaking and gibbering in the gangway. Opening his cabin-door a few inches to find out what was going on, he saw a dozen or more rats making a dead-set on one rat, which was defending itself with desperate courage. The creature made a bolt towards him. He shut the sliding-door, but not quite in time, and the poor brute's tail was cut off close to the root. He did not wish either to kill the rat himself or to hand it over to its enemies, so he turned in and went to sleep. When he woke the next morning the tailless rat was swimming round and round in his bath which, sailor-fashion in the tropics, had been poured out overnight to cool by evaporation. He found the creature convinced that he had gone out of his way to save its life, and as tame as a dog. In the daytime it hid under his pillow, and at night it curled up on his shoulder, and every morning had the first dip in his bath.

Franks, unlike the majority of his messmates, believed in education for the lower deck, and was

always ready to lend any of his small stock of books to a careful man. On one occasion he noticed that a bluejacket had selected a small encyclopædia, but thinking he wished to look up some special point he made no comment. A few days later it was returned with the patient criticism: "I read down to K, sir, but I didn't find it not over and above interestin'."

He was anxious to encourage any man or boy who combined ambition with steadiness, and until recently there were aged warrant-officers who could not recall his memory without tears. When he was quite a young man, and not at all well off, he formed a high opinion of an intelligent lad who acted as his servant. He was sent to England on promotion, and wishing to make him a parting present devoted some thought to the form that it should take. He finally decided to give him his own watch, as he would so soon have an opportunity of replacing it. In those days a watch was a very rare possession on the lower deck, and most sailors would have thought it doubtful whether a boy of sixteen would manage to retain it for more than a week. "Now remember," said Franks when he gave it to him, "I expect you to become a first-class petty officer."

Twenty-two years later he was walking through Portsmouth Dockyard, and a warrant-officer saluted him. He returned the salute, as he did fifty times a day, without glancing at the man. "Beg pardon,

sir, but you don't remember me? I think you'll remember *this*," drawing out his watch. "It has never been out of my possession for an hour from the day you gave it to me. I have never spent a penny on it, and it has always kept excellent time."

"I remember a lot of boatswains," he told me, "most excellent fellows, as good as you would find at the present day, or better. There was one I always kept up with, and I used to go and see him from time to time. To my knowledge he saved fourteen lives from drowning. You know the saying, 'Looking for it like a boatswain for his whistle'? Well, on one of these occasions he sprang overboard without an instant's pause—so many of the men could not swim three strokes that there was never much time to be lost. It was a narrow shave; I thought we must have lost both of them. And the first thing he said when he was pulled over the side was: 'Where's my whistle?' It was between his teeth!

"Almost the last time I went to see him I found him ill, and greatly worried over the loss of eighty pounds swallowed up in some rotten investment. It was not that he really needed the money; it was chiefly the mortification of thinking that he had denied himself 'to feed landsharks.' I met Admiral Hawtrey soon after, and told him about it. He said he had dropped two thousand in the same concern. The next day he sent the



boatswain five guineas, with a note saying he was sorry to think that two old shipmates had both been so badly served. Coming from Hawtrey, I believe it did the old fellow more good than if he had had all his own money back again. Hawtrey never had the reputation of being a generous man, because he was not impulsive; but over and over again, when I have told him of former brother-officers who had come to grief, or left widows and orphans badly provided for, he has written to me a week or ten days after, saying: 'I have been thinking over what you told me about poor So-and-so. I enclose a cheque, and shall be glad if you let me hear about him again later on.'

"The old boatswain did not do very well with his sons. He tried to make two of them follow his footsteps, but they simply hated the sea. One left the navy as soon as he could and became a casual labourer, and one bought himself out at twenty-seven and became a policeman. He was like his father in one way, however: he saved eight lives before he was thirty. The old man lived to be eighty-six, and died of what his wife called 'saline decay,' but he retained his faculties up to the last, and suffered strangely little."

The mutiny of a ship's company was a common event in Franks' youth, but a very rare one by the time he was a middle-aged man. Although the punishment that invariably followed was abhorrent to him, he was too just to imagine that all

mutiny had its origin in harshness and cruelty, or to heap indiscriminating blame upon the head of the captain actually in command at the moment.

“Mutiny often resulted from the effects of previous slackness. A newly-appointed captain found himself elbowed on the quarter-deck, and had done nothing but try to establish a reasonable amount of discipline. Directly and indirectly ten times as much trouble arose from over-leniency as from severity. Even nowadays laxity very quickly leads to disorder; and you can hardly imagine how soon Jack was as good as his master in the days when there was no continuous service, and quite a third of the men were street-sweepings, and three-fourths of the remainder were about as reasonable as young schoolboys, and there was always a handful of sea-lawyers ready to make mischief.

“Sometimes trouble arose from want of tact, especially if the men were called on to face a disappointment. I remember one of the most orderly ship’s crews I had ever known mutinied *en masse* because they were not allowed to go ashore in a place where yellow fever was raging. If the news had been broken to them with a little consideration for their feelings the trouble would have passed over, but, as Shaw said, the captain went at it like a bull at a gate. In ten minutes marline-spikes were flying—I have the mark of one on my forehead now, but I am thankful to say no one ever

knew who threw it—and in about two minutes more the marines with fixed bayonets were driving the men below.

“ Even if Heseltine had given the order he would have spun such a lengthy yarn that the more sensible men would have had time to recover their temper and would have done their best to check the rest, while Blissett could have sent them away grinning. Blissett had his faults, but none as far as the lower deck was concerned. He could deal out punishment with a better grace than some men could give rewards. I don’t think any blue-jacket ever bore a grudge against him.

“ Discipline is a much more mechanical thing than it used to be, and it doesn’t need the same discretion. An officer sits down with an open book in front of him. A prisoner is brought in ; he hears the charge, and asks what the man has to say for himself. He puts the forefinger of his right hand on one column and the left forefinger on another, and runs them along until they meet. Then he glances at the fellow’s record and says : ‘ You are proved to have done so-and-so, and the penalty is such-and-such ; but your record being so-and-so, it is reduced—or increased—to such-and-such.’ And that ends it. Still, the eternal difficulty remains : *when to turn a blind eye*.

“ In spite of all the talk about the spread of education it strikes me that the gap between warrant-officers and commissioned-officers is wider

than it used to be. The chief improvement has been in the rank and file: there is an enormous difference between the ordinary seaman in the days of non-continuous service and the seaman-gunner of the present moment.

“Up to a certain point education outside the home can do a great deal, and a great deal that is worth doing, but it doesn't make a gentleman or a man able to control large numbers of subordinates peaceably and without apparent effort. It ought never to enter an officer's head that any reasonable order could possibly be disobeyed, but that doesn't prevent the instinctive use of tact at critical moments.

“I recollect once that our ship was being coaled by slave-labour. Of course the coal-owners knew we didn't like it, and they dared not make any attempt to force the pace. Nevertheless the work was done in record time.

“The first-lieutenant stood on deck the whole time, encouraging the men to ‘come on.’ A South-American said to me afterwards: ‘Englishman strange, English officer more strange. Spaniards go behind with a whip and say “Get on!” and they crawl. Englishman stand in front and say: “Come on, come on! That's the way, up with it! Come on!” and they laugh, they run, yes, they run.’

“When one thinks of the brutal forms that discipline sometimes took one must remember



that cruelty cannot be practised unless the general level of humanity and the general sensitiveness to pain is decidedly low. The very men who ordered corporal punishment had been subjected to it themselves at school, and often to great excess. I recollect one afternoon at school when out of a class of thirty-three boys, eleven, including my brother and myself, were severely caned. None of us had done anything that would be considered deserving of more than a sharp reproof at the present day, but I cannot honestly say that I believe reproof would have had much effect. We were all harder and less easily influenced. Discipline may affect character, and no doubt it does, but even at the worst of times there was a rough proportion between discipline and the character men already possessed."

The men who had "gone under" turned to Franks for help as a mere matter of course, and perhaps the greatest distress of his life was that he had so little to give, and that little often seemed to do harm rather than good. "At the present day," he told me, "there is no reason to feel it in quite the same way, because if a man has *ever* been worth anything the Admiralty give him a bare maintenance: he is not left to starve. I used to begin by helping the fellows I had known, but they always sank lower and lower, and I had so many claims on me, and it seemed right to give most to people who had made a hard struggle and kept

their heads above water. But it went against my nature ; at heart I always wanted to give to the worthless, hopeless, half-starved, half-drunken scoundrels who had once sat at meat with me.

“ I remember one foggy winter’s afternoon Carter’s brother came to my house, and the maid let him in by mistake. I had determined not to do any more for him ; it was useless, worse than useless. I would not even see him ; I only heard his cough as he went down the path. My wife knew how much I felt it, and she said to the maid, not observing that I was within hearing : ‘ You really must be more careful, Mary. Couldn’t you *see* he was not the sort of person to let in without question ? ’ The girl said : ‘ He spoke like a gentleman, ma’am, and there wasn’t much light in the hall, but when I went back to the drawing-room to light the gas I saw that I had done wrong. He was drying his hank’chiff by the fire, and it *was* so black.’ I can’t tell you how the girl’s words hurt me. Every foggy winter’s day the scene comes back to me, and it will as long as I live. Two or three years later I heard he was dead. Well, I suppose he just had to begin again as we all shall ; and perhaps he started this time knowing things that we haven’t learnt yet. But it hurts me, it hurts me now, to think I let him go out in that fog without a word. What are we that we should ever withhold our hands from a fellow-creature ? The best among us might well remember that

heathen's prayer: 'O God, be merciful to the wicked; to the good Thou hast already been sufficiently merciful in making them good.' "

Quite unconsciously, and while retaining and frequently using the same forms of speech, in old age Franks had wandered far from one of the leading dogmas of Evangelicalism: man's share in working out his own salvation became larger and larger, and the period of time granted to him was indefinitely extended. He silently dropped all crude speculation as to the origin of evil, and had no doubt as to its ultimate destruction, but greatly concerned himself to know whether this consummation might in any way be hastened. "We are told that the action of good and evil are eternal, but if a man does me an injury and I endure it, and take care not to pass it on in any shape or form, have I not destroyed that portion of evil? In the same way, can I not arrest and destroy good by accepting it thanklessly and letting it die uselessly within me?"

## VIII. 'O'ER MANY MASTERS

An Order in Council—Opposition—A quiet rubber—A glorified omnibus driver—The good captain—A practical joke—An embarrassing moment—His new masters—The duties of a naval chaperon—The round voyage—A tender precaution—Writing up the route—The last straw

SULIVAN O'KEEFE was dissatisfied with his position and prospects in the navy and most thoroughly convinced that he had been "shamefully treated." He had always been more or less discontented, but he was not entirely devoid of prudence, and his frequent threats to "chuck the service" caused his wife no serious anxiety until a new Order in Council supplied the temptation of voluntary retirement at the age of forty-five and a pension equal to quite three-fourths of his pay. She did not greatly object to his retirement, as apart from service grievances he was an amiable man, and easily and cheaply amused, and "no trouble in a house," but she strongly objected to his openly avowed intention of seeking employment in the mercantile marine. The pay and allowances and the profits derived from letting one of his two cabins to any passenger anxious to secure it might be even larger



than her husband's most sanguine estimates. She had not been brought up in naval circles, and was almost entirely uninfluenced by the notion that O'Keefe would lose in social consequence. Her acknowledged motive for opposition was her real one: a firm belief that "naval ships" were safe, and that merchant ships "were always getting lost." As a last chance she appealed to Shaw to "speak to" her husband.

Shaw was ready to do a kindness to anyone, more especially to a woman with a low, sweet voice and an Edinburgh accent of the precise kind endeared to him by childish recollections of "jahn and bread" and boundless indulgence, and while he had no dislike to her husband he cherished the belief that she "had had a great deal to put up with." But he was getting on in years, and long experience had weakened his faith in the irresistible power of commonsense to influence human sentiment. Only a few days previously Mrs. Byam in her lonely old age had exclaimed: "Ah, if my little Dora had been spared!" and when he had replied: "Bless my soul! If your little Dora were alive she would be a woman over forty years of age and most likely have half a dozen children of her own," even he had observed that the poor lady had neither been soothed nor cheered nor convinced. And would any Irishman be as reasonable or as well-trained as Byam's wife? He promised that he would "put the case before O'Keefe plainly,"

but he accepted the office without alacrity or enthusiasm.

Moreover, although he knew a great deal about the merchant service, his knowledge was of ancient date, and he had an uneasy feeling that arguments based on his recollections of captains of sailing vessels, in the days when voyages lasted for several months, would not apply with much force to life on a modern liner. He clearly remembered the time when the skipper often had the privilege of "victualling the passengers, and ran things so close" that, if the voyage were lengthened by bad weather, his clients' position varied from one of serious discomfort and annoyance to one of actual danger.

A standing dispute with Heseltine was that he possessed, and in heated moments was even accused of having actually worn, a medal awarded to him by the Board of Trade for saving life at sea, "when all he did was to hand them over a barrel of government flour and some salt-beef. They had already picked up some pork from another merchant ship, but it stunk so abominably that they had to shut the passengers below while it was hoisted on board, and when it came to table one of the women burst into tears, and couldn't touch it even to save her baby's life. The child literally died of starvation, and her boy of three had been living on coarse water-gruel until he was just two handfuls of skin and bone. The captain had

provisioned for 80 days, and the voyage had lasted 120."

An equally characteristic story was of a ship taking a single passenger who had paid high terms and expected decent consideration. The first day's dinner to which he sat down with the captain and the second mate consisted of lobscouse, followed by plum-duff, the shape of a stout rolling-pin and much the same consistency except at the two ends, which were white and pulpy. The captain suspended his knife above it, and asked, "D'you like ends?" the first words uttered during the meal. "No," said the passenger with decision. "Me and my mate does," was the reply, and cutting the pudding in two he slipped half on his own plate and half on his subordinate's.

"Heseltine and his blessed old medal! There's always been a lot of bunkum talked about saving life at sea, and I suppose there always will be. Only the other day one of Hobbes' sons was in command of a gun-boat, and he heard unofficially that a big merchant ship had run aground about a hundred miles off, and he went full speed to see what he could do for her. He soon saw that she would be right enough if they got her off within a couple of hours. There was no time to be lost, but the skipper held him off, and at last asked point-blank: 'What'll you charge?' 'Charge? *Charge?* Nothing at all, of course. It's our business.' 'Come on, then!—But I'd

like to see the vessel of our size that *I'd* put a line aboard under three thousand pounds !'

"There's some excuse for bargaining when you know how little shipowners will give voluntarily. I had a pleasing specimen of their conduct once. I had a large party of bluejackets out on the rocks salving a ship, working for hours in a blazing sun and cutting their boots to pieces. A few weeks later a sum of money was sent me to be divided equally among them, and really I couldn't offer it to them seriously—I had to make a jest of it. It literally wasn't enough to replace their shoe-leather.

"And the innocent public haven't much idea how many ships are lost on purpose, even now. And others would be lost if some of the more intelligent men were not on the look-out for tricks of that kind. I know a case where the engineer went to the skipper, revolver in hand, and said: 'I can see you've orders to lose this ship; you don't lose her while *I'm* aboard.' And he didn't; but she was lost the very next voyage.

"O'Keefe hasn't the faintest idea of the kind of thing he is letting himself in for. There was a time—five and thirty years ago perhaps—when it was a toss-up whether a man who hadn't a service name wouldn't be as well off out of the navy as in it, especially if he hadn't much brains. Why, even nowadays, I could teach any boy who knows decimals all he needs for a merchant-skipper's



certificate in six weeks. I mean a teacher could do it : it would drive me mad. But the days when anything was to be had in the merchant service are over. I know fellows of my own age and standing who were getting £850 and perfectly open and above-board opportunities of trading on their own account when my full pay was ten shillings a day. And now they grudge me my pension ! ”

After some thought Shaw decided to invite O’Keefe to spend the evening with him, and asked Langley, who had a brother-in-law in the merchant service, to “back him up.” He hesitated long over the fourth member of the party. Franks’ judicial mind was of value, and his serene temper made him an excellent moderator in merely academical disputes, but this discussion was fraught with practical consequences. Besides, a quiet rubber was the ostensible inducement offered to O’Keefe, and Franks had never even played Patience until his wife died and his sight began to fail. Heseltine’s hesitating wordiness excited Shaw’s contemptuous impatience, but he was likely to see sides of the case that quicker men overlooked, and his childhood in Ireland, though past before O’Keefe was born, might supply the elements of a common language. Moreover, he could be trusted to minimise what Shaw secretly considered the one great advantage enjoyed by the captain of a passenger ship, namely, the frequent,

if brief, opportunities of seeing wife and child, home and country.

Langley was the first to open fire.

“How do you think you will enjoy being a sort of glorified omnibus driver, patronised by the passengers in fine weather, and held responsible when the stormy winds do blow, and asked to explain great circle-sailing to a director who doesn't know an arc from an ark? You who can hardly be civil to a live admiral if he dares to be foolish!”

“It won't take them long to learn with whom they have to deal.”

“Well, just look at that brother-in-law of mine, Rhys. He's like yourself, proud as the devil. If you have all the Irish kings, he has all the Welsh princes on one side and an English duke on the other. His wife thinks more of the duke. So do I. He's an ugly-looking customer but he's alive, and that's the main point when you want to get anything out of a man. I saw him once: he was wearing white-duck pants with a hole in 'em, and a monkey-jacket with brass buttons. When he asked for a railway ticket the booking-clerk offered him a pilot's at a reduction, and he took it like a shot and gloated over it. Well, Rhys has commanded ships since he was twenty——”

“Oh, come, Langley,” put in Shaw hastily, “that won't do. There's law 'n order even in the merchant service. You can't have a master's

certificate till you're twenty-one." (He suddenly recognised that this was cross-firing, but tactically it might not be an error: it looked better than a united and continuous attack.)

"You could if your uncle was a parson and copied your baptismal certificate for you," retorted Langley with dark significance. "Any way, he's sixty now, or more. People must have had time to find out he's a gentleman, but the other day a passenger leaving the ship offered him the remains of a bottle of whisky that he hadn't had time to finish."

"Oh—well—" said O'Keefe disgustedly, "that kind of thing must be quite exceptional."

"You wouldn't want it to happen *often*, would you? Then how would you like to be questioned to death? It's a sort of thing captains are not trained to in the navy."

"Indeed, no," cried Heseltine. "I have known a single question drive them raving mad on the spot. One day I saw old Bewley walking up and down the quarter-deck and he seemed absolutely sane. The senior doctor, a man quite as well born as himself, and a good deal better bred, said to him just for the sake of saying something: 'Do you think we shall get in to-night, sir?' He turned and glared at him like a maniac: 'By what right do you presume to question ME, sir?' Nice training that for the merchant service!"

"I'm sure no one can call me bad-tempered," said O'Keefe huffishly.

"My dear fellow," said Shaw, "it isn't a question of good temper or bad. It's a sort of specialised temper that is wanted, just as a club servant has a specialised memory for hats and walking-sticks. With all due deference to Langley, Rhys ashore has the most abominable temper I ever came across. First he rages, then he sulks. Even poor Byam got over things in time, but Rhys wouldn't find eternity long enough. And as to Bewley, as an old boatswain said one day when he had been pitching into him and the first-lieutenant condoled with him, 'Oh, it's only a little service-rosin, sir. It'll soon rub off.'"

"Service-rosin, indeed!" interrupted Heseltine indignantly. "One day his obstinate and arbitrary temper lost us four hundred killed and wounded. The deck was swept clear in five minutes, and not a shot fired in return."

"And the people at home thought how fierce the fighting must have been, and that anyone but Bewley would have lost twice as many. My dear fellow, it's the way of the world."

Heseltine looked whole volumes of protest, checked by a furtive jerk of Langley's thumb and the significant reminder, "The boy stood on the burning deck," and Shaw continued without further interruption:

"The point we have to bear in mind at present



is that you can't tell a single passenger the plain truth, much less have the deck swept by cannon-balls, because you choose to believe, in spite of competent advice, that they are merely going to whiz a hundred feet above your head. On shore Rhys often refuses to speak to his own children for a week on end, and yet he told me this himself——”

Langley abandoned his brother-in-law's character to Shaw's tender mercies, made a long arm for Mrs. Shaw's copy of *Lamb's Essays*, refreshed himself with “The Good Clerk,” and passed it on to Heseltine, who caught the point after the story was finished.

“Rhys told me that one day about eight hours before they were due in New York he ordered a quartermaster to stand near him and make a pencil-stroke on a sheet of paper every time he heard the question: ‘Think we shall get in to time, Captain?’ When he counted them up it came to 187, and each time he had said quite pleasantly: ‘Oh yes, I think so.’”

“Well, the ship exists for the passengers,” said O’Keefe; “naturally they expect a little consideration.”

“You can be as considerate as you like, but they’ll have their knife in you! One day my brother-in-law went up to a passenger who had just come aboard. ‘I have had the pleasure of meeting you before.’ ‘I think not,’ she said,

but so suavely that he persisted : ' Oh, yes, you went out with me two years ago in the *Ostro*.' ' I certainly went in the *Ostro*, but I could not tell you who commanded her. I was very hard up at the time and I was a second-class passenger.' "

" Well, a captain ought to remember that his duty is to the *whole* of his passengers," said O'Keefe virtuously.

Shaw looked up from the careful mixing of his three-water grog and asked shrewdly : " When do you go to Liverpool, O'Keefe ? Ah, well ; suppose we have another rubber ? "

" I must spin just one more yarn before we coil up ropes," said Langley. " Rhys is hardened to most things, but this gave him an awful shock, A lady on board had made herself exceedingly unpopular, and the last night before they got into port some of the passengers wanted to score off her, and asked Rhys how they should do it. Well, I suppose being such a young and inexperienced man he forgot what O'Keefe very properly calls the duty of a passenger-captain, and he said : ' Make her an india-rubber sandwich.' Sandwiches were always handed round at 10.30, although dinner wasn't over much before nine. ' Capital ! ' they cried. ' It only has to be the biggest on the dish and she is dead-sure to take it.' She did : she bit into it, and bit harder and harder. She turned crimson, her brows twitched violently, and to Rhys's amazement and horror one of her eyes

started from the socket, rolled down her cheek, and fell on the deck. He hadn't the faintest notion that it was glass, and no one else had either. They had all seen something queer in her look, but called it a squint.

"Then at table in calm weather you have to be amusing. Rhys has a list of stories which he tells in succession, or when the right opening occurs. Perhaps a shark is following in their wake, and the passengers begin to talk of things that have been found inside sharks, from a marine, with his bayonet fixed, downwards. Then Rhys strikes in: 'I've seen many sharks opened, but the most curious thing I ever saw inside one was a copy of the *Illustrated London News* tied up and addressed to myself.' No one believes the yarn, but my sister says it is the only true story he ever tells. A little girl passenger, a child just able to walk, had wandered into his cabin and thrown the whole of his mail overboard, and the shark was following and snapped it up, and then they made a point of catching the brute."

"There is a much more practical point to be considered," said Heseltine. "You will find discipline exceedingly difficult to maintain. In the line you think of joining there is very little continuous service, very little indeed. You will have a sort of skeleton crew who know the ropes a bit, but the main part of your ship's company will be swept up at the last moment from gin-shops and

common lodging-houses. The chances are that quite fifty per cent. of them will be the worse for drink until you are three or four days out."

"But in a first-class liner——"

"I assure you that in this respect the main difference between being the captain of a liner and the captain of a rotten cargo-boat is that you will not personally search the lowest dens of Liverpool or Cardiff or Glasgow at midnight to find your men. That part of the work will be done for you."

O'Keefe looked a little harassed and made no reply. Shaw began to feel that he had done well in making choice of Heseltine as an ally, but unluckily the momentary silence encouraged him to continue, and he weakened the point he had made by adding :

"The marvellous thing is how rarely these men behave badly in an emergency. A fellow who had been over forty years in the merchant service told me that he had only once known men refuse to go aloft."

"What happened ?"

"He knew that unless the sail were shortened they would be done for. He said all he could think of, and not a man budged. He said it over again, and then one fellow broke out of the crowd and made a run for the rigging. It was a Frenchman. That gave him a stirring text, and in no time the work was done and the ship saved. He



said it was the only time in his life that he had ever been in danger at sea."

"And how shall you like having your wife patronised by the owner's wife? Despard & Co. married quite an uneducated person, but my sister has to sleep and dine there twice a year, and she's supposed to live on the honour for the rest of the six months. She was telling my wife how intolerable she found it, and how the good woman called her 'Mrs. Rhys' every time she opened her lips, and it got on her nerves until she could have screamed. My wife said: 'I should call her Mrs. Despard just as often.' 'And if they gave David the sack?' my sister asked. 'Oh—then it would be Mrs. Despair.'"

"That's about what it would be!" said Shaw with conviction. "If you once lose a billet of that kind you're out in the streets. You never get another."

"The Admiralty are our father and mother," declared Heseltine. "They may be hard on you sometimes, especially when you are young, but you have to be a very black sheep indeed before they utterly disown you."

"And owners are step-parents," said Shaw. "Nothing that you can do is considered enough to cover your miserable keep."

"Say what you like, there were twenty good men after the berth."

O'Keefe was the first to leave. Not one of the

trio was in the least anxious to retain his name on the active list of the navy, but they resented his desertion, and took severe views of his character.

“He has one great advantage,” said Langley: “he’s not easily put out of countenance. Twenty years ago when he was a very handsome young fellow he was out in the West Indies—Barbadoes. About a dozen of us were smoking and talking when some black women came aboard with the laundry baskets. One of them, a fat, jolly old soul as black as your hat, peeped in at the mess-room door, drew back and peeped again, and after doing it half a dozen times or more she sang out joyfully: ‘Yes, it *am* my dear Loberty-boy!’ rushed in like a tornado, flung her arms round O’Keefe’s neck, and kissed him fondly. He never turned a hair. He kissed her, got up, placed a chair for her, introduced her all round as his old nurse, poured her out a glass of wine, and sent her off as pleased as Punch, and of course no one could say a word. If he had shown the least embarrassment he would never have heard the last of it. He really was awfully good-looking in those days. I remember his calling on my wife while we were in lodgings. When we came back to tea the maid told us someone had called but he had left no card, and she couldn’t for the life of her remember his name. I asked what he was like, and she said: ‘Sure and his eyes were never made for the saving

of his soul.' We both exclaimed, 'It must be O'Keefe!' in the same breath."

"The Barbadian negroes are a proud people," said Heseltine, who had just had time to arrive at the conclusion that the laundress had mistaken O'Keefe for one of her former nurslings. "Do you remember how they used to say, 'Victoria nebber fear while Barbadians stan' 'tiff'?"

"I remember the sergeant's orders: 'You that got shoe an' 'tocking stan' in de front rank.'"

"Let me tell you an occasion when Langley *did* look embarrassed," said Shaw. "We landed together one afternoon at St. Helena and met an official who was an old acquaintance of his, and he asked us to come out and dine with him and his wife. Presently I noticed that we were followed by a child dressed in the ten-little-niggers' style—ragged straw hat, striped shirt, and bare legs. I put my hand in my pocket and gave him some coppers. He took them, but continued to follow at very close quarters. At last Langley noticed him, and asked, 'Who's that?' 'Oh, it's my boy.' Langley knew that slaves were landed there and apprenticed (the old ladies in England imagined that they were returned to their happy homes in Central Africa, all being able to give correct postal address), and he said: 'Rather small to be much use. What made you take the little nigger?' The man pretended not to hear. A few minutes later his wife ran out and seized

the little ragamuffin by the arm : ‘ You naughty child, where have you been ? Nurse has been looking for you all the afternoon ! ’ ”

“ I wish I knew where that artificial eye was made,” said Heseltine, still far astern.

Shaw fidgeted restlessly with the cards.

“ As far as your experience goes, Langley, how long do you think O’Keefe will stand the work ? My own impression is that he’ll be out of it, lock, stock, and barrel, in less time than he spent in talking about it.”

“ I doubt it,” said Langley ; “ as a favourite author of mine says, ‘ It ain’t natur for a feller to let on that he’s sick o’ any bizness that he went intu of his own free will and accord.’ ”

“ It’s over forty years since I left. It was a hard enough life then, but no doubt things have vastly changed.”

“ They haven’t altered much as far as boys are concerned. Only the other day I knew a case where towards the end of the voyage the apprentices lived chiefly on grain and raisins—part of the cargo—steamed over sea-water, and even at the beginning the lads could only draw fresh water for washing once a week. There were seven of them and they instantly split up into two messes, and the water was the Shibboleth that divided them. Four of them instinctively decided that they would draw their allowance on Sunday, but the other three, Rhys’s son, and the son of a banker,



and the youngest son of an Irish baron, said: 'Wash on Sunday? Never!' and drew it on Wednesday."

Some years later Shaw, with slightly malicious satisfaction, related a few of O'Keefe's experiences as captain of a liner:

"The first voyage across the Atlantic began with bad weather, and it got worse and worse, so he was very little troubled with the passengers; but one night an old lady sent her maid to him with her compliments, 'and did he think the ship would roll much more.' He said: 'Give my compliments to your mistress, and say that if she *does* roll much more she'll roll over.'

"On the way home there was an American statesman on board, a fellow who thought he knew everything. He took an observation, muddled his head over it for a couple of hours, and then stepped up on the bridge and told O'Keefe he was out of his reckoning. O'Keefe was so much astounded at his impertinence that he was simply speechless. The old fellow showed his figures to the senior apprentice, and the boy very quickly put his finger on the error. He was a decent old chap in his way, and, instead of letting well alone, he thought he ought to make some acknowledgment to O'Keefe. O'Keefe listened to it, and made a quotation—he must have picked it up from Langley or Heseltine, or he would never have got as far as the words that did the mischief.

The wind carried the harmless part away, and all that the old fellow heard was : ' Drink deep, or taste not.' He took it for a personal insult, and all the fat was in the fire. O'Keefe never knows anyone else's business, and if you don't know anyone else's business you *can't* know your own. I suppose he was about the only person on the ship who didn't know the man's private character, and even without any previous knowledge he might have seen that the fellow he called his secretary was a doctor, and that he was perpetually on the watch to keep him away from the whisky bottle.

" Well, the owners soon decided that his manners were hardly bland enough for the Atlantic, and they put him on the Cape line. There was rather a boom in South-African marriages just then—I mean among the kind of people where the man couldn't afford the time to come home to fetch his wife—and although O'Keefe likes girls well enough he got pretty well sick of chaperoning brides-elect.

" You might imagine that it would be easier than chaperoning unattached ones, but not a bit of it. Nine women out of ten lose their heads on board ship ; their previous conduct doesn't give the least assurance how they'll behave. He took out one girl whom I knew very well, had known her from a child, always a quiet, well-behaved little thing. She flirted so desperately all the way out to the Cape that the fellow heard of it and

refused to marry her. O'Keefe had to bring her back again and break the news to the family. They had spent pretty nearly a year's income on her trousseau, not counting the passage-money. He took out another bride and the man was bankrupt before she arrived; so *she* had to be brought home.

"All that kind of thing got on his nerves, so they put him on the round voyage. He had to take charge of passengers with suicidal or homicidal tendencies, people in the last stage of consumption, and millionaires' half-baked sons. Naturally O'Keefe hated *them* the worst of the lot. One day they were passing down the north-west coast of Africa, but a long way out. One of these youths was looking through a telescope, and asked: 'That Africa, Cap'n?' 'Yes; that's Africa.' 'I don't think much of Africa, Cap'n.' I really think that if Langley had tried to make him realise that he would be called 'Captain' like a dog and much oftener, it might have had some effect on his decision. I never knew anything about it myself until I retired and found that large numbers of quite decent people thought it the proper way of addressing me. I never heard it without wishing to wring their necks!

"O'Keefe was a sympathetic fellow, and the consumptives used to wring his heart, especially the lads, because they came alone. They were always going to get better and never did, and the

best he could do for them was so beastly uncomfortable. He used to rage at their friends' folly in sending them : ' The poor young beggars have got to die, but why on earth can't they be let die at home in peace with their women-folk to look after them ? '

" One day a few hours before they left England the purser came to him with a telegram in his hand :

" ' What am I to do about this, sir ? It's a telegram from that young Hirton's mother telling me to buy him a lead coffin. '

" ' What on earth ! ! ' "

" ' Well, to begin with, men are almost as superstitious as ever they were, and to get them to sail with a coffin aboard is probably more than could be managed. And a lead coffin costs forty pounds ; and when I tried to get the woman to pay about a third of that amount, to secure a cabin with some chance of fresh air, she almost told me in so many words that I meant to put the extra money in my own pocket. '

" ' Mean old hag ! If I were *sure* it wouldn't be wanted I'd carry it in my own cabin, just for the pleasure of making her pay for it. '

" ' He's no more likely to die during the next few months than I am, ' protested the purser.

" ' Then, ' said O'Keefe, veering round suddenly, ' if the poor lad can't have the cabin he *does* want, I'm hanged if he shall have the coffin that he doesn't.



If he lives it will scare him, and if he dies it won't do him a ha'poth of good.'

" 'What reply shall I make ?'

" 'Say that her telegram has received due attention.'

" Not long after this O'Keefe was in a white fury over a letter from the owners saying that they were giving a celebrated author a free passage on the tacit understanding that he 'wrote up the route,' and he was to have the best cabin in the ship and receive 'every possible attention.' O'Keefe simply handed the letter over to the unlucky purser, who had to shift about twenty people, and got worn to a shadow persuading them that they had all gained by the change.

" The man arrived, and of course sat at O'Keefe's table, but beyond wishing him good-day, or answering a question in as few words as possible, O'Keefe never spoke to him. Whether this influenced the passengers, or whether they did it on their own account, I don't know, but they all gave him much the same treatment.

" About a week after they set sail O'Keefe's private servant made a charge against the fellow. He denied it flatly, but O'Keefe came down on him like a cartload of bricks. He sputtered with rage: 'Is a servant's word to be taken before mine?' '*My* servant's is,' said O'Keefe. Of course he vowed vengeance, and O'Keefe prepared to resign, but the owners were dumb as a fish.

He never heard a word more of the matter. The fellow was an impostor; the real Simon Pure was paying his own passage on another line. Served them jolly well right! A decent man might work his passage in the stoke-hole, but he wouldn't consent to do it in a state-room.

“Then another class of passengers gave him a lot of trouble, although personally he got on with them swimmingly—elderly working-women going out as first-class passengers to join sons who had made money, and who refused to allow them to travel in any other way. One of them, an honest old soul, looked with vexation at the conglomeration of spoons and forks and wine-glasses, and said to a fine lady whose origin she had instantly detected: ‘Me and you would be a deal more comferable travellin’ second. P'r'aps we're a bit old for steerage, though it's luckshury to what it was when *you* remembers it.’

“Another, grieved to the heart at her son's reckless outlay on her behalf, tried to cut down the incidental expenses by washing and drying her clothes in her cabin. The other ladies objected, especially to the drying, so she hung the garments over her shoulders in festoons and sat in the sun on the promenade-deck. The thought of giving tips to the servants was agony to her. She consulted O'Keefe, and he told her that it was absolutely necessary. She turned the matter over in her mind for some days, and then asked if it would

be sufficient to give the head-steward five shillings 'and the rest accordin'.' He remorselessly told her that if she did not give the man a sovereign he should have to do it himself. Otherwise every old lady travelling alone would have to suffer for her parsimony. She stood firm; so did he. When she found the steward actually had the sovereign she gave way, but it was like pulling out her eye-teeth.

"But it was a girl who was the last straw, a pretty little creature not more than eighteen, but a confirmed mischief-maker, and O'Keefe was supposed to be in charge of her. One day an elderly lady who was of more social importance than any one else on board, and a remarkably pleasant woman, asked a man young enough to be her son to have a game of chess with her. He made some clumsy excuse, and moved away. Presently she asked another young fellow, and the same thing happened. O'Keefe felt desperately annoyed, and came forward and asked if she would play with him, and she did. As soon as he could catch the men alone he fell foul of them, and asked if they did not know that they ought to have felt honoured, &c. He spoke to them separately, but they both went in for an Adam-and-Eve business and told the same tale: the little minx had seen them playing chess with the old lady on the previous day, and had threatened that she would never speak to them again if they did it any more.

“ O’Keefe said nothing to the girl about that, because he thought it decidedly mean of them to give her away, but she was mixed up in five or six disturbances, and he lost all patience. He had a cutting tongue when he was angry, and the girl subsided ; but she had her revenge. Just after they got into harbour, when the deck was crowded with all sorts and conditions of men and he was alone on the bridge, she went up to him, tilted his cap back and kissed him—a good fore-and-aft kiss—‘ Good-bye, you dear old stoopid ! ’ ”



## IX. GEESE AT HOME

Tailors and outfitters—A Blue-Nose—The dyer's hand—Waste labour—The un-handy man—Cant phrases—A cot-quean—Child's play—A safety-valve—Widows—Counsel for the defence

“**W**HO is that man talking to your husband?” asked Mrs. Shaw.

“A sailor for a penny!” exclaimed Mrs. Langley.

“But how do you know?” protested Mrs. Elliott from the creaking, uneasy depths of a cane chair brought from Madeira for her special use. As far as she was concerned there were only two classes of living men, John and not-John. There were many classes of women, and in her inmost heart she labelled Mrs. Langley as “just a little bit too much like a soldier's wife.”

“The clothes are enough to prove it,” explained Mrs. Shaw equably.

“Ready-made clothes on a man who ought not to be wearing them, who looks as if his boots and shirt cost more than all the rest put together.”

“They're not exactly reach-me-downs,” continued Mrs. Langley critically; “modern naval men are a step beyond that. His outfitter keeps his

measure, and goes on board to meet him every three or four years, and assures him his figure hasn't altered half an inch in the interval. Up to five-and-thirty a man's appearance may be able to stand that sort of thing, but by the time he begins to notice that his coats are 'a bit tight in the armhole' he ought to know the difference between a tailor and a naval outfitter. The outfitter takes uniform seriously, and unbends his mind over plain clothes."

"I think sailors looked best when they were not ashamed to be seen in uniform," said Mrs. Elliott.

"Perhaps they were younger then," suggested Mrs. Shaw, smiling down on her husband's thin fair hair and Johnny's tousled grey mop. They were sitting on the balcony of the Elliotts' new house while their husbands smoked and took a quarter-deck turn on the only path wide enough for three to walk abreast. A fourth man had joined them, and they stood perforce in a knot, as Johnny was eyeing the sparsely-sown lawn with what Langley called "a keep-clear-of-that-paint-can't-you" expression. The balcony faced north and had no view of the sea, but they sat there contentedly: it was a hot day in July, and naval officers' wives have about as much satisfaction in gazing at salt water as farmers' wives find in a ploughed field, or clergymen's wives in hearing sermons. Early in their married life Mrs. Elliott had once

innocently suggested that her husband should take her out for a row. He was, and remained, her lover, but he was sailor enough to reply with unaffected consternation :

“ Out for a pull ? For *pleasure* ? Dear, I call it tempting Providence, besides letting my country off too cheaply if I get drowned. You wouldn’t think of asking me to go tiger-shooting, but I assure you that for two people to go out in a boat of the size that one man can pull is far more dangerous.”

“ Uniform is like the shirt of Nessus now,” continued Mrs. Shaw. “ They are all frantic to drag it off even when they know it must be put on again an hour after.”

“ I don’t know how they would fill up their time otherwise,” said Mrs. Langley. “ I have known Will change seven times in a day, and not make half as much fuss over it as a civilian does over changing a pair of muddy boots.”

“ Uniform is so becoming,” repeated Mrs. Elliott regretfully.

“ They used to wear it a good deal when I was a girl out in Halifax,” said Mrs. Langley. “ It’s rather uncomfortable for other people, especially when they wear epaulettes,” shrugging her shoulders at the prickly remembrance.

Mrs. Langley, as Heseltine hastened to inform every stranger inclined to admire her, was a Blue-Nose, and he usually added with acid emphasis :

"I cannot imagine how it is that so many naval men married them." Blissett once checked this little habit for many months by shouting genially : "Then I'll tell you. No imagination needed. Plain matter o' fact. After you'd been knocking about in the West Indies for five or six months they sent you up to Halifax, and every single Blue-Nose looked so absolutely lovely that only two things on earth could prevent you from marrying them. One was being married already, which was my case, and the other was if they wouldn't have you. Perhaps that was your's ?"

"After all," said Mrs. Shaw, as the knot broke in two and the quarter-deck exercise was resumed, "why trouble about their clothes ? If they went to the best tailor in London anyone who had ever seen a sailor before would find them out in five minutes. And at worst it is only a misfortune to be a naval officer ; it isn't a crime. I suppose it is entering their profession so young that stamps them so deeply, and that is a thing which cannot be helped. As my husband says, no one but a fool or a boy would be a sailor, and they don't want fools."

"Perhaps sailors are tidier than other men," said Mrs. Elliott vaguely, trying to recall the domestic habits of her father in order to contrast them with Johnny's.

"I can't give Will a certificate. He has three chests of drawers in his dressing-room besides a



wardrobe and two old sea-chests, and his rule appears to be 'a case for everything and nothing in its case.' Luckily seven or eight of the drawers have stuck fast, but that leaves him twelve to turn upside down every time he wants a necktie or a stud."

"I think most of them are orderly when they have become accustomed to the loss of their servant," said Mrs. Shaw, casting her impartial mental glance over three generations, "but they have no sense of beauty. They like things 'ship-shape,' and some of them like 'clear decks,' but as long as their possessions are piled neatly one on top of the other they care nothing about colour or congruity."

"Or waste of labour. And a sailor never wishes to spend money on mending anything. However valuable it may be, you either patch it up yourself, or pitch it overboard."

"There are worse alternatives: you treasure it in a useless condition, or spoil five or six other things propping it up. One of the legs came off the sofa in the dressing-room. Dick put his dressing-case under it. A second leg came off, and he put his father's old mahogany shaving-case and a last-year's Navy List. A third came off, and he confiscated the two French dictionaries that my father bought in Madeira after his ship had taken Napoleon to St. Helena. I know the fourth leg will be off soon, and then I really must make a

point of having the thing mended. He does not realise how these tricks hinder the servants. When he first retired he had seven sea-chests of ancient date piled up in the garden with an old tarpaulin over them. Our only boxroom was far too small, and nothing would induce him to part with them. He wanted to put one in each bedroom, but I was afraid. Bob and Willy once nearly suffocated Gertie by persuading her to play at the 'Mistletoe Bough' and rather miscalculating the time. Finally some inexperienced burglars tampered with the pile, and then he paid a marine-store dealer five shillings to take them away."

"If ever servants complain of any difficulties with their work, sailors always say: 'Bad workmen find fault with their tools.' But so do good, and servants ought to complain on that score very much oftener than they do. I am sure I have hardly ever done any piece of work usually done by a servant without discovering some bad tool patiently endured for weeks and months. Make-shift may have been a great virtue in the old days at sea, but it is folly and extravagance on shore."

"All cant phrases are irritating," said Mrs. Elliott. "The other day I was in a railway carriage with a woman who had a six-weeks'-old baby in her arms, and was in mourning for a child who had died suddenly about two months before. Her husband was working half-time, and not even certain of that. She was on her way to a distant

hospital where her widowed mother, after an apparently successful operation for cancer, had had a dangerous relapse. 'I'm afraid,' she told me, 'she'll be gone before I get there, though I started the very moment I got the telegram. It's dreadful for all of us. We've had such a heap of trouble.' 'Oh, you must look on the bright side o' things,' said a fellow-traveller with cheerful impatience."

"Talking of hindering the servants, Will expects two maids to do all the work of the house inaudibly and invisibly, and because it can't always be managed he says I have no idea of discipline. As if one could discipline a maid on a month's notice! I can't send them to prison, I can't stop their pay or their leave, I can't even swear at them, and yet the work is done."

"More or less," said Langley, who was walking alone now and had good hearing.

"More or less! The last time I had tea on the guardship there were nine mess-servants, and an average of six men for them to attend on. All the same, the teapot had yesterday's leaves in it. Not an odd two or three such as my poor undisciplined maids would overlook, but the whole lot. And as to getting a stitch of sewing done—why the marks on your socks were sewn on at right angles! But come up here if you want to argufy. At that distance your voice gives you too great an advantage."

“ Let me finish my pipe.”

“ Smoke in peace. The conversation has swung miles away from you, Mrs. Elliott ; he is afraid I am going to talk about the Carters. They are *my* neighbours now.”

“ Poor woman, has she any servants ? She always has so much trouble with them.”

“ They are supposed to have three, but they seldom have more than one, and not always that. Mrs. Carter never *will* keep any while she has a husband, and when he dies I dare say he'll take care she hasn't any money to pay them.”

“ But my husband has always spoken of ‘ old Charity Carter ’ as if he were as steady as time,” objected Mrs. Shaw.

“ So he is. And in any case that kind of thing wouldn't put you on the servants' Index. He has a mania that everyone wants to rob him, and he will manage everything himself. He looks through the larder, orders the dinner, buys the children's clothes, and settles when the sweep is to come. He *can* order a dinner, too. That's why he isn't half as unpopular with men as he ought to be.”

“ But how did he manage when he was at sea ? ”

“ He didn't marry until he retired. That kind of man never does. They say that a greedy Irishman is the most grasping thing on earth, and I am sure a suspicious sailor is the meanest ! He married a timid girl five-and-twenty years younger



than himself, with no mother to stand up for her and no father worth naming. She was supposed to have money and it turned out to be much less than he thought, which did not sweeten his temper, but it would not have made any difference. His little plans would have been just the same. Soon after he was engaged he happened to hear Will say that the first thing he gave me after we were married was a cheque-book, and that it was the only thing I never lost, and he said: 'I mean my wife to ask me for every sixpence.' Old Heseltine—you know he would compass heaven and earth to get a rap at me—said it was the wisest thing Will had ever done, as experience soon taught a woman that she could not spend more than her husband possessed, and nothing would teach her to spend less."

"Doesn't he make her an allowance of any kind?"

"Not a farthing. The other day she said to me: 'I did so beg Henry to buy me a bonnet, and he wouldn't.' He went to the shop with her when she wanted to buy a rattle for the last baby. It was fivepence-halfpenny, and I heard him say complainingly: 'The one we had before was fourpence-three-farthings, and it was quite as good.'"

"Dick told me that when he was at sea he shut down the lid of his inkstand between each dip for fear anyone else should use it."

"The worst of your husband's stories is that

they are always true. I often wish they weren't. I can take as many grains of salt with Will's as I like. He was telling me the other day of one of his early captains who was so saving in his habits that all through a long commission he kept his cooking-utensils in their original packings. He arranged to have his meals at the same hours as the wardroom, and however often they changed his cook had orders to do the same."

"The Carters have such a dear little girl of seven or eight," said Mrs. Elliott. "She came to tea last year when my brother's children were with me. She had a pitiful little out-grown frock, and when she took her hat off in my room I found that her hair was tied up with a bootlace. I thought the nurse had done it to make a firm hold for the ribbon, and I said: 'You have lost your ribbon. I must get you another.' The poor child looked desperately uncomfortable, and while I was turning over a box to find one she whispered, 'I didn't have any.' I said, 'At any rate you had better have one now, and you can give it to your doll when you go home.'"

"Was it a red ribbon, rather wide? She wears it still. There was such a fuss about it the last time I was at the house. The child had washed it herself and pressed it in an old leather-bound book of logarithms that belonged to her father, and some of the dye came off, and he was in a sputtering rage. I should have liked to stand

him in front of a looking-glass, as I used to do with my little boys when they lost their temper. Old gaby, I don't believe that at the best of times he knew the difference between a logarithm and a locomotive."

Mrs. Langley had always had a houseful of children and saw no special pathos in the incident, but Mrs. Elliott's eyes filled with tears, and in her inmost heart she once more asked high Heaven a never-answered question.

"No naval man's daughter would put up with money arrangements of that kind," said Mrs. Shaw.

"Perhaps that is why he didn't marry one; but if a man has to live on his pay he most certainly should not marry outside the service. I remember an assistant-paymaster who became engaged to a city man's daughter. He introduced her to me, and I felt so sorry for him that I tried to make her understand what a divided income of £300 a year meant, two messes to keep up, frequent travelling expenses, uniforms, possible spells of half-pay and all the rest of it. 'Oh,' said the girl, 'I don't mind being poor. I should love a small house, and at first I should only keep two maids, and I'm sure I could dress quite well on fifty pounds a year.' Even Mrs. Elliott raised her hands in horror."

"And what happened?"

"I could not tell him what she said to me, but I conclude that she said very much the same

to him. He got rather nervous, and talked so much about what she would have to do if he died that the engagement came to a sudden end."

"I think one of the strangest and most uncomfortable things about sailors is their constant harping on the subject of their own death," said Mrs. Shaw.

"It is hardly to be wondered at," said Mrs. Elliott a little reproachfully. She had never arrived at the outwardly matter-of-course attitude maintained by the average naval man's wife towards the perils and dangers of her husband's profession. "It is natural that they should think of death."

"Quite natural to think of it, but if they talk about it until your children say 'when Papa dies' as calmly as 'when my boots wear out,' people don't call it natural. They call them inhuman little monsters, instead of thoughtless parrots. In his first three or four letters after leaving home my husband always dwelt at length on his death, and every time he came back he made a fresh will, and the old ones were left lying about anywhere. Of course I locked them away when I came across them, but one day I found my eldest boy reading a copy to the other children, who sat in a circle wearing black scarves and holding handkerchiefs and sniffing at set intervals."

Mrs. Elliott looked rather shocked: her dream-children were of a different calibre.

"At any rate it was safer than playing at



courts-martial with the little ones for prisoners,” laughed Mrs. Langley. “One day I went to see why Ted—he was just seven—had not started for afternoon-school with his brothers, and I found him dangling over the banisters by a rope. Luckily they had had sense enough to put it round his chest instead of his neck, for it was a properly made running-noose, and pulled so taut by his weight that I had to cut it with a knife. I asked where Kathy was, and he told me quite at leisure that she ‘didn’t wish to be hanged,’ so she was ‘in the cells,’ and the cells ‘was the rain-water tank under the roof.’ I forgot that it had not rained for a month, and flew up to the attic like a whirlwind. She had managed to clamber out of the tank, covered with soot and dust, and was sitting on an old portmanteau under the skylight poring over a translation of *Les Misérables*. The elder boys used to tease Ted incessantly, but they didn’t get much change out of Kathy.”

“Such big boys—such a little girl—” murmured Mrs. Elliott.

“Oh, I’m afraid that hadn’t much to do with it. Her father said she carried too many guns for them. One summer I let them take Ted down to bathe every morning. He looked rather blue after it, and I asked Willy if he remembered to see that he always dipped his head well under. He said with such suspicious readiness, ‘Yes, I always

dip him myself, mother,' that I thought that might be the explanation, and asked, 'How long do you keep him under?' He considered the matter solemnly, and then said very slowly, 'As long as I think sufficient.' "

"Poor wee Teddy. He nearly killed my little nephew out of pure kindness. He had been very ill and was still in bed, and we had to be extremely careful about his diet. He was beginning to get dull and fretful, and I asked you to let Teddy spend Saturday afternoon with him. They seemed shy of one another, so I left them for a few minutes to see if that would break the ice. Very soon I could hear them through the door chattering like magpies. Then there was a sudden silence, and something warned me to go back. I was just in time. Teddy had spread out a halfpenny-worth of periwinkles and a halfpenny-worth of green plums, and he was saying as I went in: 'No, you are to have them *all*. I bought them for you. I get plenty to eat at home.' He was a most amusing child. A few months later you changed houses, and he told me quite seriously: 'I shall come and see you, you know, Mrs. Elliott, although we *do* live in such a big house now.'

"My boys ought never to have found time to do the wrong thing—they were always saying it. I used to envy Mrs. Shaw. The most embarrassing thing I ever knew one of her sons do was to fall asleep while old Heseltine was 'explaining.'

We both had a good deal of responsibility. It is rather trying to have a houseful of boys and to be their sole parent for two or three years at a stretch."

"I don't think it was much easier when the father returned," said Mrs. Shaw. "All men are a little unreasonable about children, but sailors are most desperately ignorant."

"They think children ought to be born grown-up, and *would* be, if it were not for their mothers' over-indulgence."

"Perhaps they suffer more from their ignorance than the children do. When Admiral Bewley came back from China his eldest son, a little fellow not able to speak plainly, said to him, 'What have you dot for me?' He was cut to the heart. More than twenty years after he told me the story with tears in his eyes: 'I said, "I have brought nothing for you, and I never will." And I never did.' Everyone knows what an awful time he had had, and that it was a wonder he came home alive, but if the child had been three times the age he could not have understood it. I should expect more disinterested affection from a dog than from a little boy. And one day, years ago, when I was at their house the youngest girl came in from school and complained that a chimney-sweep had pushed against her on the pavement and blacked her dress. He turned to her, and said in the bitterest tones: 'As you go through life you will do well

to remember that you are in other people's way, not they in yours.' It might have been a wise thing to say to conceited, selfish young people of double her age—but to a sensitive child of eleven! She used to pick up everything he said, and it was impossible to know how much she understood. One day she was talking to me in a terribly grown-up fashion, and at last I said: 'But my dear, if this is true, why do we live at all?' She looked straight in my face, and replied in the most matter-of-course way: 'We live because we can't help it!'"

"In some ways sailors are extremely careful what they tell children," said Mrs. Langley, but they put most cynical notions into their heads. One day when Kathy was between five and six Will took her for a walk. He did not think of leading her, and presently she exclaimed: 'I wish you would hold my hand like the other little girls' papas!' He said: 'Oh, you mustn't believe all the humbug you see and hear. When those men go home they beat their little girls.' I don't know whether she believed it or not, but at any rate she never forgot it; and children can disbelieve a thing and yet be quite as much affected as if they did believe it—in addition to being able to believe and disbelieve almost at the same moment.

"Soldiers are not quite as unreasonable. My brother was invalided last year after that nasty



little frontier war, and he had a serious relapse after he arrived. The only boy is the youngest of the family, and one afternoon he was allowed to stay alone for half an hour with his father. To amuse himself he turned out his father's dressing-case, and came across his medals. My brother was feeling most depressed, and a trifle sentimental, and he said seriously to the little fellow: 'If I die, Herbert, those will be yours.' The boy made no immediate answer, but after a few moments he said coolly: 'They're three-quarters mine already, aren't they?' My brother burst into a fit of laughter. He said it might have killed some men, but he thought the little beggar's horrible coolness actually did him good."

"One never knows what children think," said Mrs. Shaw a little sadly, "though I have heard mothers—and teachers—boast that they knew 'every thought that passed through their little brains.'"

"What consummate idiots! I had not many delusions of that kind, but I *did* think Kathy was a religious child, and I often took her to church in the evening because I thought she liked it. After she was grown up she told me that until she was fourteen or fifteen she hated Sunday so intensely that she was out of spirits as soon as it was Thursday, and that when I made her go to church a second time, especially in the summer, she felt that life was not worth living. I might have had

my eyes opened one day when she was about eleven, but I lost the chance. She had two much smaller cousins staying with her, and Will noticed the way in which she seemed to be finding their places for them, and he said to her very sharply afterwards—though I believe the thought had only just flown into his head, and there was no reason why it should be in hers—‘If it’s too much trouble for you to find their hymns, I’ll do it myself. Even if they can’t read three words at a stretch they are trusting to you, and I call it an act of deception to open a book anywhere and ram it down in front of them.’ She was too much hurt to say anything to him, but she said to me afterwards: ‘Mother, I *did* find them the right hymns. I never have to turn over more than two or three leaves, and I very often open just at the right place.’ I made Will see her do it; men have such a way of coming down with a crash on a child, and then saying they don’t want to hear any more about it. I never thought of asking her how it was that she could do it; I took it for some peculiar exactness of touch. And then only last week she told me that when she was a small child her one consolation in church was to make bets with herself as to how few leaves she would turn over before she found the hymn! She did it for years, and if she lost she returned home more depressed than before.”

“Even if you had known I do not see what you

could have done. I often think that children's misunderstanding of what we tell them is worse than the original error."

"If ever I tried to explain anything to my boys they took the most public means available of misapplying what I had said. The first time Ted heard of half-pay he was anxious to know what it meant, and who halved it, and why it *wasn't* half, and so forth. A few days later he was found fault with in school for having an exceedingly black handkerchief, and replied: 'I'm very sorry, Miss Mitchell, but I can only afford two a week. Papa is on half-pay.' After Will had been at home a week or two his ideas became rather confused, and he said to a roomful of strangers: 'I like half-pay best. There's more to eat.' Will, don't fill your pipe again. We really must go. All of us. Mrs. Elliott is tired to death."

"Well, now that the corroboree is over, what is the conclusion of the whole matter?"

"I can tell you that," said Shaw, eagerly thrusting in his oar. "It's the one conclusion our wives always arrive at when they get together and compare notes: Sailors *may* be swans abroad, but they are certainly geese at home."

"Nice, useful birds, too. Why don't you order a dozen, Johnny, to eat down the grass? Save a lawn-mower, and last you all the winter."

"Bless my soul, Langley!" cried Shaw, "do birds eat grass? I give you my word I never knew it."

Johnny surveyed the lawn doubtfully—carefully sifted brown earth lightly pricked at irregular intervals by delicate green needles—

“What do you think, dear?”

“I think the nightingales will be sufficient for the work at present,” replied his wife with her usual serenity. After all, was he not more to her than ten sons, or even one little daughter like Milly?

“What does the compound interest amount to?” asked Mrs. Langley a few minutes later.

Shaw looked down at her slightly puzzled.

“I saw you pacing out the lawn.”

“Three-sixteenths of an acre, and I calculate that the cost per foot amounts to——”

“I can’t see that Johnny is more absurd than any other sailor-man, and he is far more amiable.”

“He’s the most amiable fellow under the sun, but of all the unreasonable——”

“Anyone who has the gift of being unreasonable without being disagreeable would be a fool not to use it. It is a very rare talent. If you and Will and I possessed it, I don’t think much more would be heard of our consistency or commonsense.”

“I don’t think I *have* heard much of Langley’s commonsense.”

“Or of my consistency? I saw you were dying of thwarted contradictoryness, so I cleared a safety-valve for you. Some women plaster them



over thickly with soft answers, and are quite amazed at the wholly unscriptural result. You know how atrociously I play whist? Old Bewley was my partner the other night. I really did my best, because I knew Will would pitch in to me afterwards if I upset him; but even luck was against me, and I saw that it was getting more than he could stand, so I said in a very airy way, 'I don't play by rule.' 'So I should *judge*, Madam; so I should judge.' Then he quite recovered his temper. If I had made abject apologies it would have been oil on flames."

"I detest people who do it," said her husband, who had caught her last words as he halted to say good-bye to the Shaws when their roads parted. "There is only one genuine apology, and it would never be accepted: 'I meant it, and I mean it now, but I was a fool to say it.' And often it's only a mean way of putting a spoke in your enemy's wheels. And in any case it's embarrassing."

"When Captain Shaw has changed his mind about my inconsistency it won't embarrass me to hear him say so. If he likes to call it unwearied aiming at perfection it will do quite as well."

"I think I'll change my mind about Langley first. Any message for Heseltine? I shall see him to-morrow."

"Oh—just chin-chin."

"How that woman talks, Mildred!" com-

plained Shaw as they turned away. "I wonder you can endure being boxed up with her for two solid hours."

"None of you seem able to 'endure' your messmates' wives. Fortunately it is not part of your duty to Queen and Country."

"I can endure Mrs. Elliott. She's one of the kindest and sweetest and most tender-hearted of women."

"So kind and sweet and devoted that if Johnny were ill, and if she thought it would do him any good, she would see you roasted by a slow fire, and ask you 'not to disturb him' if you squealed."

"And Mrs. Langley, then?"

"You men can't perceive it because her sharp tongue confuses you, but she belongs to a much higher and more humane type. In such a case *she* would say: 'You really mustn't be fanciful, Will. If we shoot him through the head first it'll answer quite as well.'"

"If Johnny had had any children he would have had to take a back seat like the rest of us," said Shaw, who suffered from the true sailor's one form of jealousy.

"For a time. If you could only believe it, it is our children's need that appeals to us. We have no illusions as to their merits."

"Not even about your sons?"

"Not even about them. Did you hear how Mrs. Langley defended herself when Johnny accused

her of caring more for her sons than her daughters ? She said : ' From the day they were born they have been so much more trouble to me than the girls that, unless I made-believe they were worth it, I really could not put up with it. ' ”

“ She would say anything but her prayers. The other day she was telling me a long yarn, and I said : ‘ You really must excuse me, but this is rather a different version from the one you gave me last autumn. ’ She laughed, and said as coolly as you please : ‘ Surely you wouldn’t like me always to be saying the same thing ? ’ When Heseltine boasted that he had never had an hour’s anxiety over his sons, she snapped out : ‘ Then you ought to have had a great many ! ’ ”

“ But you know that you agreed with her. ”

“ Well, as Langley generally remembers when it is a little too late, truth is a poor excuse. What was she saying about the Carters ? ”

“ Oh, nothing new. Why do you always call him Charity Carter ? ”

“ It was Carrotty Carter originally, to distinguish him from his brother, who had the same initials. About the most stupid trick that parents can spring on their children. Then he lost his hair, and he lost his brother——”

“ Lost him ? ”

“ Kicked out. The exact opposite of Charity. Solomon talks about the uselessness of braying a fool in a mortar, but perhaps if he had tried

braying two fools together it would have been a more successful experiment. Fellows went on calling him Carrotty Carter all the same, until one day Stewart was abusing him for his meanness in Franks' hearing, and he said: 'As far as my experience goes, finding fault with a man to his face only makes him angry, but doing it behind his back has no effect at all—on *him*. Carter is not generous to his equals, but for all you know he may be extremely charitable to the poor.' From that hour he was called Charity. Poor old Franks declared he would give up opening his mouth except to put food into it, and he really did get very silent as time went on."

"I never found him a silent man."

"No; he would always talk to women, and to me and two or three other fellows who, as he expressed it, 'tried to keep the door of their lips.' He hated swearing, and he simply couldn't stand coarseness. He was fond of Blissett when he was a youngster—there was about twenty years' difference in their age. One day Blissett was swearing rather freely, and another man said: 'What must your pious friend think of you?' 'D—n it!' said Blissett, 'he would rather hear me blaspheme than hear you snigger.' And so he would, though he blamed himself for it, and thought he ought to have ranked blasphemy as the first and greatest sin of the tongue. It is just a trick of speech with Blissett. He means no more when he says



D—n it! than you do when you say ‘How annoying.’ Once we had a Frenchman on board for a day or two. He spoke English remarkably well, but he kept on saying ‘What a damage!’ as a comment on Blissett’s yarns. Blissett doesn’t know a word of French, and he got rather vexed—thought the fellow was poking fun at him. Talking of Carter, he looked an awfully bad colour the last time I saw him. He eats too much. He’ll get an apoplectic fit one of these days.”

“His widow would hardly be inconsolable.”

“There you quite make a mistake. I don’t know any woman who would miss her husband more. You don’t know as much about widows as I do. I’ve seen an awful lot of them. She’d be most hopelessly at sea without him. When Langley and I die it will be a very different matter.”

“Dick!”

“My dear, I’m not saying anything personal; I’m only trying to explain what I mean. I don’t say you wouldn’t regret us, but you’d find your feet immediately, and if you married again it would be because you chose to, and very likely the men would be a vast improvement on us. I don’t say that either of you have been accustomed to have your own way, for married people never do—neither a termagant nor a wife-beater is half as free as if they were single—but you’ve been accustomed to manage things, and you know where to go and what to do and whom to ask. You have

no conception how helpless a woman is if she marries, like Mrs. Carter, at eighteen, and then for the next twenty years has never been allowed to call her soul her own. Why, I knew one widow who dressed to go for a walk, and then sat down and cried because she had never been for a walk by herself ! ”

“ Poor man. I am afraid your messmates’ widows have been rather a burden to you. No wonder you criticise their wives so much : you look at them with a prophetic eye.”

“ Well, it’s no wonder that St. James makes it a leading Christian virtue to visit widows. Any-one might fancy it was a very ordinary human impulse. Let ’em try it, that’s all ! And then in a year or two, after I had done all I could for her, she would be married to someone who wanted her money, and the children would be planted out in charity schools, and the boys pitchforked into the merchant service, or packed off to the colonies.”

“ You make me understand some things that I never understood before. Many men think of training wives, but you think of training widows. It is generous, but a little unusual.”

“ One ought to be prepared for every contingency.”

“ One contingency never seems to have crossed your mind. I might——”

“ I never let it,” said Shaw vehemently. “ How could I have gone on serving if I had let myself

think of it ? How could any man ? Do you think that sailors' wives are ever quite fair to their husbands ? Or even to one another's husbands ? Take Carter. You only think of him as a man who bullies his wife and is too fond of eating and too fond of money, and his brother was too fond of other men's money and other men's—well, he's dead. But what made Carter what he is ?

“ I knew his father, a man about twenty years older than myself. He was a paymaster, a steady-going, honourable man, as generous as he could afford to be, and as unsuspecting as a child. He married a girl down in the country somewhere. Her father was a solicitor, who had always sailed too close to the wind, and he died soon after, and it appeared that he left very little money and oughtn't to have left any at all. I don't mean that Carter wanted money with his wife, but he wanted a woman accustomed to straightforwardness in money matters, and he didn't get it.

“ He was ashore for nearly two years after he married, and they were very happy together. Then he went abroad, leaving her with a baby a few weeks old. His pay was about five hundred all told, and he allowed her three of it, and sent her all he could screw up in addition.

“ At the end of the commission she was seven hundred pounds in debt. Of course he ought to have cut her allowance down and paid off the money gradually, and let her feel the pinch. He

was too proud and too impatient to do that. He sold out a few shares that his father had left him, and that he had intended to keep for Charity's benefit when he was old enough to enter the service, and let her start fair again.

"The next time she wasn't as much to the bad, but he had to borrow money, and from that time until he died he was never entirely free from money troubles. A stern chase is a long chase! The boys must have heard an incessant talk about money from the time they were six or seven years old. Sometimes things were at such a pass that they scarcely had food to eat. At last she died, and Carter managed to pull things together a little, and put them both in the service, but he died, a worn-out man at fifty-six, before they could well look after themselves. Can you wonder at the result? If Charity had done as his father did I believe the result would have been all right. His wife was very timid and rather credulous, but experience and the children to take care of would have cured all that. She might have paid people twice over, but she would have been sure to pay them once. Still, can you be surprised that he hadn't the courage to try the same tack?"

"Tout comprendre——"

"Yes, but after all it doesn't do to make too many allowances. I think Charity Carter is about the most kickable man I ever met."

"You are rather fatiguing, Dick. First you



make me cry *peccavi* as a most censorious person, and then you veer round without any warning and shout, 'As you was!'"

"It does no harm to look at both sides of a question ; but you have to drop one of them if you want to get any forrarder."

## X. DEAD POS'-CAP'ENS

Retired leisure—The mighty fallen—One Gallio—Red-tape—A choice of acquaintances—Wholesale catering—Rum-drinking—Physical labour—Commuting—The test of poverty—The general thanksgiving—Imagination—Soldier, sailor, and civilian

“**W**HEN I first retired,” said Langley, “I used to polish the furniture. And now if I had any work to do I wouldn’t do it! ’Stonishing how little it takes to fill up your days. I was always walking over the house altering the blinds, and I used to watch the fire, hoping it would do something that would be a pretext for poking it.”

“Like Squeers on the look-out for an excuse to box a boy’s ears,” suggested Shaw.

“I wonder your wife’s nerves could stand it,” said Heseltine.

“Pooh! It’s only the women who haven’t any nerves themselves who won’t allow their husbands to have any. My wife *did* draw the line at letting me walk up and down in my socks—said the sound reminded her too much of a caged bear—and there’s very little satisfaction in walking on a carpet in your boots. In ten minutes you’ve had enough of it. But she let me poke the fire as

much as I chose. Coal was cheap that winter : we only gave nineteen shillings a ton."

"I wouldn't let you poke the fire if coal were at pit-mouth prices," protested Shaw, the only 'first-class stoker' in existence, according to his own belief. "You do it like a woman—from the top."

"My dear fellow, the right way to do things depends on your object in doing them. When I poke a fire I want to let off steam and make a confounded row."

"I think I felt retiring more than any of you," said Shaw. "The first year I wore out an awful amount of boot-leather. I walked an average of fourteen miles a day, chiefly by myself. I could never walk and talk except on deck. I've brought it down to a fraction under ten now."

"Perhaps it was a mistake for you to break away so completely from old associations," suggested Heseltine, whose interest in naval matters, exceedingly languid while on the active list, had increased with each year of retirement.

"There isn't much fun in being a dead dog in places where you've been a live lion. It's best to clear out and keep out until men have some excuse for forgetting that they used to grovel before you."

Langley nodded appreciatively :

"One day some years ago I was walking with my wife, and I saw Bewley about a hundred yards

ahead. I slowed down because I didn't want to overtake him. I get on well enough with him alone because I know his susceptibilities, but my wife *won't* know them—says she does it on principle. Two young subs from the College came along, so busy talking and gesticulating that they didn't see him. He was on the kerbstone. He always walks on the extreme edge of everything, and if there's a sea-wall he lifts up the chain and walks outside : I think it's a morbid fear of being elbowed. Whether they actually touched him or not I can't say, but at any rate he went staggering into the road. They stopped at once and raised their hats, and mumbled something in a perfunctory way, and came on towards me. I recognised them, and said : ' You young ruffians, it isn't three years since he hauled down his flag.' ' It was the merest accident, and we apologised.' ' I don't suppose,' I said, ' that you are capable of pitching a man of his age into the road, and then passing on without a word, but will the incident affect your night's rest ? Do you think you take it as much to heart as if he were the junior captain on the list, or a commander, or even a lieutenant tolerably certain of being made in the next batch ?' They only grinned."

" Astonished they didn't wink and dig you in the ribs. No doubt they agreed with a man who told me forty years ago, ' It's better to be a live mast-'sistant than a dead pos-'cap'en.' Young rascals !



I was going up that steep hill near my house one foggy evening last winter and three grammar-school boys passed, and one said: 'Look at that old fogey in a white muffler.' I said, 'Take that from an old fogey,' and cut the two nearest over the shoulders with my walking-stick. They tore down the hill as if the Old Gentleman was after them."

"I thought Bewley went at once to live in Kensington?" said Heseltine.

"So he did; but he used to come down for a few weeks from time to time when his son was stationed at Selsea. He knew well enough what a difference retirement would make. Two of their servants were most anxious to go to Kensington with them. His wife rather liked the idea, but he did all he could to choke them off, told them it would be a small house, no men about the premises, and only three servants all told. They stuck to it and he gave in, but in a very few weeks they were in a hurry to leave. It wasn't the work: they couldn't stand the loss of consequence, and were simply enraged because people didn't come in shoals to call. Mrs. Bewley was thankful to get servants who hadn't the faintest prejudice as to the way in which an admiral should be treated—in fact half-mistook the title for his Christian name. I think they got among rather a queer set of people. I was at their house one day, and a woman who was calling told me that she had a young cousin in the navy: 'he was only a mid-

shipman to begin with, but he behaved so well that they made him an officer.' Imagine the lad's feelings if he had heard her ! ”

“ People talk a good deal about the navy,” said Shaw, “ but it would astonish you to find how little is understood just outside the circle. Even among soldiers I never come across a man who grasps that commanding a ship doesn't necessarily mean that you are a captain. A lady in the provinces, a fairly well-educated woman, asked my son when he was passing his examinations for a lieutenant : ‘ and then will you be an A.B. ? ’ A girl in the north of England, whose father was a big ironmaster, asked my wife : ‘ What is the use of the navy ? What does it *do* ? ’ She really wanted information, but when my wife had said all that could be said in two or three minutes, her idea seemed to be that we are a kind of water-police ; and a dressmaker here, a woman who goes out to work by the day, tells everyone that she has put her son in the merchant service in preference to the navy because he would be ‘ so much sooner a captain. ’ ”

“ One can hardly wonder at *her* ignorance,” said Heseltine, “ but my son told me that only the other day a parson had a protégé on a naval training-ship, and he addressed the lad's letters, H. Smith, Esq., and seemed so utterly at sea with regard to his position and prospects that the first-lieutenant thought the best thing he could do would be to

invite him to spend a couple of days on board. By dinner-time the second day he seemed to have grasped that the boy had no great certainty of becoming an admiral, and announced at table : ' I think I shall make him a paymaster.' The paymaster, a stout elderly man of very good family, was only saved from apoplexy by the first-lieutenant's prompt declaration : ' It is just within the bounds of possibility that he may stand in *my* shoes, but all the silver in Broken Hill Mine could not turn him into a paymaster.' "

" A little further out there is just as much ignorance about the army," said Langley. " I recently had a young nephew at Sandhurst, and just before he passed out he met an old school-fellow who was ' something in the city.' He told him that he was a lieutenant in some volunteer regiment, and added quite kindly : ' I wish you could be one of *us*, old fellow. It must be beastly having to work up from the ranks.' "

" It's a change of atmosphere when you retire," said Shaw, and I felt it more than either of you because I never cared for books, and it was months before I could get into the way of reading newspapers every day. It isn't easy to work up much interest in politics. Although I was a householder before I was thirty, I was over sixty before I had a chance of recording my vote. But I was hardly ashore when they began plaguing me to know if there was any reason why I should be exempt from

serving on a jury. I said I had an ungovernable temper, and if I were shut up in a stuffy courthouse for three hours they would have to take the consequences—I should bring everyone in guilty, with evidence or without.”

“Law is one thing and justice another,” said Heseltine. “Out in the West Indies one of our youngsters was ashore and he saw a negress, quite an old woman, walking along quietly with a basket of clean clothes on her head. A white man pushed against her so roughly that the things were all flung in the dirt. The lad felt so enraged at such idle brutality that he struck the man. Instead of returning the blow he summoned him for assault—just the spiteful trick you would expect of a bully, and quite enough to give the captain a handle if he wanted to get rid of the boy. The magistrate fined him ten shillings, and then asked him to dinner and returned the money. The boy was glad enough to get it. He did not understand that it had to come out of the magistrate’s own pocket.”

“I think I more than half agree with Heseltine that you made matters worse for yourself by breaking away from all the people you knew, and all the things you were accustomed to. It was too great a wrench.”

“I turned it well over in my mind. I thought I’d seen enough of service men. It’s better to live among civilians and enlarge your ideas a bit.”



“ You confounded humbug ! For a couple of years you knew practically no one at all, and who are the men you see most of now ? Seven soldiers of sorts, one sailor turned parson, one turned imbecile, and one you’ve known half your life and always disliked, and two Indian Civil Servants. There was no need to take yourself and your furniture sixty miles for that ! Your barber cut my hair this morning, and gave me his views as to the local amenities. ‘ There’s a fairish number of sojer officers, but they only know one another, and there’s a few naval officers and they won’t know *anyone*.’ Perhaps I don’t do justice to his accent, but I’ll take my oath as to the substance of what he told me.”

“ The only fellows who retired gracefully were those who had spent a great deal of time on half-pay,” said Heseltine.

“ And home-appointments ; especially the ones where mud and water were about equally proportioned. Shaw never believed in anything but foreign service. Even now he thinks it more meritorious to serve in far Cathay than in the Channel Squadron. I know very well which rubs your hair off first.”

“ What a length of time the commissions used to last, though we hardly saw the worst of it. Old Sanderson told me that he was six years, getting on for seven, out in the Pacific, and once for more than a year he had not a chance of sending a letter to England.”

"If I had had a wife like that I shouldn't have cared if they'd lasted sixty years," said Shaw impatiently.

"You would have been like Gallio, if you ever heard of him."

"I should think everyone had, though I don't see any point in the comparison."

"I don't mean the one who drove St. Paul's accusers from the judgment-seat—though it may have been a further episode in his history for all that I can tell. That's the worst of scrapping up an education by miscellaneous reading—the clerk at the bookstall complained to my wife the other day that the list given him was 'varied and 'eavy'—you don't splice the ends together properly. Well, this Gallio was banished to some Greek island, and was supposed to be eating the bread of bitterness and drinking the water of affliction, but somehow news came to Rome—the postal arrangements must have been pretty good—that he was as merry as the day was long, so the Senate recalled him to his wife 'to accommodate their punishment to his feeling and apprehension.' By the way, how do you manage to get hold of your pay out here?"

"I show myself at the bank once in three months."

"Stewart was in an out-of-the-way place like this, and he was ill and had to let things slide. Then he got a magistrate to witness the most recent

of his pension papers and sent them all in. They cashed that one, and wouldn't look at the others. They knew he was alive, but wanted proof he hadn't been dead during the interval."

"Your friends seem to be scattered all over the place," complained Heseltine. "You have no one close at hand to drop in for an hour or two on a wet day, and yet you are surrounded by people living in decent houses. You ought to have a large choice of acquaintances. Who lives in that house at the end of the road with a couple of acres of garden?"

"Man called Baddesley."

"I seem to know the name."

"If you ever look at a newspaper you probably do. He's been bankrupt three times, and he's living now on the money that he settled on his wife."

"It's legal. And you're out for new ideas."

"Legal! What's that got to do with it? Why, the fellow's living in luxury, and some of the men he swindled can hardly keep a roof over their children's heads or give them bread to eat."

"Well, there's that man we met coming up from the station yesterday. He turned in somewhere quite close. You never introduced us, though I felt he yearned to know me. Don't fancy he was quite as much drawn to Heseltine—looks too much of an ascetic. Why did you shoulder him off?"

"He wears diamond rings."

"That's an old prejudice of yours ; now's the time to shake it off. I've known quite decent fellows wear rings."

"Did they wear four at a time, and black finger-nails in addition ; and did they take the beastly things off and expect you to handle them and guess the cost ?"

"Can't say they did. How about that neighbour who looked over the fence this morning and said he couldn't find his claw-'eaded 'ammer, and wanted to know if——"

"He's a very shrewd, sensible fellow. H's have nothing to do with ideas."

"So I thought when he said he'd a h'idea of training 'oneysuckle round a h'arch. I should like to see more of him. Why don't you be a little friendly and ask him in to-night to play whist ?"

"I asked him once : once was enough."

"Doesn't look at all the sort of man to keep an ace up his sleeve."

"Up his sleeve ! I sent both packs up the chimney when the door had hardly closed on him."

"Lose your temper over *cards* ? What a falling off is there !"

"What had the man done to the cards ?" asked Heseltine, who never voluntarily wandered from the point.

"Said they were too thin, and every time he dealt he licked his thumb."



Langley repressed a sympathetic shudder :

“ Is *that* all ? ”

“ How’d you like it yourself ? ”

“ I never said I wanted new ideas. I’ve too many already. My brain’s like Elliott’s seed-beds—in need of thinning out. But you’ve paid down good money to get them, and it seems to me you are squandering your opportunities in the most reckless fashion. What’s the use of conveying all your goods and chattels here, and then associating with seven old Indians as like as split peas—and much the same colour—three Queen’s hard bargains and——”

“ I suppose Rhys will have to clear out next year at the farthest. He’ll be utterly miserable ashore. No wonder he tries to cling on as long as he can.” (Whenever Shaw wished to produce a more chastened frame of mind in Langley he made a point of referring to his brother-in-law’s “ most precarious position.”)

“ I don’t know why he should.”

“ Fifty years at sea——”

“ Well, he hasn’t grown fins or anything of that kind, has he ? With you at hand to dash a bucket of cold water over him occasionally, he’ll breathe all right ashore. I pity the dog ; he’s always mistaken Rhys for a visitor up to the present, and been extremely civil and indulgent, but he’ll have to put his paw down pretty firmly when he comes home for good ; I pity the maid-

servant ; I pity my sister ; but I'm hanged if I'll worry myself about *him*. He must get on like the rest of us ; he's saner than you think. But he'll have to take in a great many reefs, bring his ideas down a peg or two all round. My sister has to waste more the fortnight he's at home than she can save the ten weeks he's away. He has sat at the table of a first-class liner for so many years that he doesn't seem able to realise that five people only need a tenth part of what you would provide for fifty. The last time he was at home my sister was ill. He was awfully concerned about it, and kept plaguing the nurse to know if there was nothing he could buy. She wanted to get him out of the house for a couple of hours, so she told him that new-laid eggs were exceedingly scarce, but if he went to such and such a place—two miles off—he might be able to get a few. He bought five dozen, and came back enormously pleased with himself. The woman hadn't the heart to tell him that they would be chickens before my sister could eat them.

“ The worst waste is when he brings anyone to the house—luckily it doesn't often happen. He's so dead-sick of being civil to strangers that you can excuse him for being inhospitable, but when he does invite anyone everything under the sun has to be at hand, whoever they may be. Once he brought a fat old ship's purser to the house and the man asked for rum, and he was wildly enraged

because there wasn't any. As if a woman could be expected to keep rum on the premises! There was brandy and whisky and all the rest of it."

"I can remember when rum was very commonly drunk in the navy," said Heseltine.

"By hopeless old toppers. I don't think in your time it was ever the ordinary drink in a mess. I've seen men swallow half a square Dutchman at a sitting, and on top of all they'd had at dinner. They couldn't do it now if they tried. I was considered a very temperate man, and no one remarks my sons' habits, but their wine bills are about a third of what mine were."

"My sons are teetotallers," said Heseltine complacently.

"Swing of the pendulum—natural reaction," said Langley maliciously; "must be a great relief to your mind! But talking of boredom, Shaw, I wonder you didn't take to gardening? Elliott would have given you a leg up, and Heseltine knows any amount. So does my wife."

"And you?"

"Bone in my back."

"So've I. I pass for a strong man. I don't mind doing a dozen miles at a stretch, and I believe I could stand on a bridge almost as many hours as Rhys, but when it comes to work there isn't a rheumatic hedge-gardener of seventy-five who couldn't beat me to smithereens."

"Because I can't push a lawn-mower my wife draws the conclusion that I never earned my pay."

"And my wife locks the beastly thing up for fear I *should* use it. She says I'm a most powerful man—and totally unfit for physical labour."

"Fact is, we've never done any in our lives."

"Never," agreed Heseltine.

"And for the most part we were so crowded together that only men with sedentary tastes could do anything at all. Many of us were like Indians—able to suspend thought. Fellows who couldn't do it drank, or quarrelled, or threw up the sponge. O'Keefe, for instance——"

"Have you heard the last news about him?" asked Shaw.

"Gone to sea again?"

"He'll pretty well have to if anyone will take him. Commuted and bought a farm in Kent. No water, and after three years of it he's bankrupt."

"Meanest trick the nation ever played on us was that commutation business."

"The Admiralty made him keep eighty pounds a year."

"That only proves their villainy. They *know* we're fools over money matters, or why did they put in that provision?"

"O'Keefe on eighty pounds a year!" exclaimed Heseltine, shaking his head mournfully. "And his wife?"



“Dead, I’m thankful to say,” replied Shaw biting.

“Don’t you think she’d rather be alive and making things a bit smoother for him? When a man’s unlucky you seem to think his wife has a right to get out of it.”

“Unlucky! I call it a breach of contract to have made away with his income. She married him, knowing he was a poor man and always would be, and she was quite content, but there’s a long gap between poverty and pauperism. If a naval man’s a pauper it’s his own fault.”

“You used to talk a good deal about being a pauper yourself,” objected Heseltine.

“I know I did, but one day Hobbes said to me: ‘My dear fellow, you talk of poverty, but what do you know of it?’ I told him a few things I’d done, and done without, and he said: ‘Look here, let’s tie you down to a definite point; when’s the last time you wanted fifty pounds and didn’t know where to lay your hand on it?’ I couldn’t tell him. ‘Then,’ he said, ‘don’t talk to me of poverty.’”

“You’re an obstinate fellow, but your skull’s not entirely without thorough-faresomeness.”

“Live and learn; live and learn.”

“At our time of life it should be live and teach,” said Heseltine sententiously. Langley winked at Shaw, but not in time to stop the vehement cry:

“Teach! I’d much rather die than teach.”

“To judge from many of your expressions you don't value life at a pin's fee. It's really very good of you to live so long. Or are you like Bewley's little girl, live 'because you can't help it'? Do you remember her rounding on old Bewley, and saying: 'Why was I born? I never asked to be?'"

“I had to read the general thanksgiving a good many hundred times on board ship, but I assure you I have never joined in it on my own account.”

“You remind me of what my wife said the other day when we came out of church: 'I may have prayed for a humble heart, but I don't want to have it.' She was evidently afraid she might receive one unless she explicitly disowned her share in the petition.”

“I've never honestly felt thankful for having been created. I don't see how anyone can reasonably be expected to be thankful. Just think of all the things that are going on in the world at this moment. Think even of the things one has seen. And done!"

Heseltine was taken aback; Langley gazed in the air and quoted:

“Lord God! judge mildly Thou this man,  
For by his will he ne'er began  
The toilsome road through life's short span.”

Shaw listened approvingly:

“There's more sense in that than in most hymns. 'Tisn't in the Ancient and Modern, is it?"

Langley peered at him for a moment, hardly believing he could be in earnest.

“Why on earth don’t you ever read poetry?”

“I can’t endure it. What’s the good of imagination?”

“Imagination? Why, we live by it,” said Heseltine. “What we imagine is one half of our life, and what we imagine other people imagine is pretty nearly the second half. When I was a young fellow serving abroad I used to get very few letters; postage was too serious an outlay for a widow with a scattered family. I knew it was no lack of affection on my mother’s part, and that she would always write if anything of consequence happened, but when the mail came in, and other fellows had letters and I had none, my heart went down into my boots. Even if there were only a bill I was satisfied; it was a letter, and other fellows could not see the contents.”

“My dear fellow,” said Langley, “if you hadn’t an imagination I wouldn’t advise you to get one; but to have an imagination like yours and starve it all your life—well, it takes it out of you when you retire.”

“I cannot understand your caring to associate with soldiers,” said Heseltine after a pause. “In our day there was a good deal of enmity between the army and the navy, and I do not even profess to be free from prejudice. The mutual distrust

must have been of old standing, for I once read a novel of Fielding's in which a soldier on board ship complains of being treated more like a prisoner of war than a member of the sister-service."

"A soldier may be this, or he may be that," said Shaw, "but you soon find that he is nearer to you by a long chalk than any civilian. A few months after I retired I was walking along a country road and an old soldier overtook me, and we began to talk. Presently he said: 'You are an army man yourself?' 'No,' I said rather indignantly. 'Well, the navy then. It's all the same thing.' I didn't agree with him at the time, but I soon found he was right. You can't understand civilians' point of view. This is only a trifle, but it will show you what I mean: A lady in this place—her husband was a soldier, but she was the daughter and granddaughter of naval men—had to sell all her furniture and go abroad with her husband. She was at home a few days before the sale, and I went to call on her. There were seven or eight people there, and among them a very rich merchant whom she and her husband had known for some years. The sale was mentioned, and he said: 'There is one thing of yours that I have always admired immensely, Mrs. Cross. So has my wife, and I am coming to make a bid for it.'

"Quite naturally she wondered what she had worth his envy, and said: 'Is there really? Do tell me what it is!' He pursed up his mouth and



said: 'You must excuse my answering that question.' After he had gone she said to her son, a young undergraduate: 'What did he mean, and why did you look so black?' Well, I told that story to six or seven naval and military men, and they were all nearly as slow of understanding as she was."

Langley, having received so much assistance, caught the point instantly, and looked on with amusement at Heseltine's conscientious ruminations, ending in his frequent, "I do not quite follow."

"I doubt if there is a child in this road who wouldn't have seen at once that the old scoundrel meant: If I tell you what it is I want to buy you'll tell the auctioneer, and he'll run the price up for his profit and yours."

Heseltine looked scandalised, and replied with unusual haste and decision: "Nothing would induce me to live in such a place!"

"I think you'd better clear out of it, Shaw. Heseltine evidently thinks you're not too old a dog to learn new tricks, and you've often told me that *he's* a man whose judgment can be relied on."

## XI. CHANGES AND CHANCES

Ships and men—Parsons' sons—Discipline—Wine bills—Cooking—Smoking—Fancy ratings—Uniform—Born sailors—Changes in physique—Pay and allowances—A practical reduction—"Jolly sailors"—Patronage—Courts-martial—The shadow of death

"**T**IMES are changed," said Shaw.

"Times always changed as fast as they could," replied Langley with equal truth.

"When I look at a modern vessel I say to myself, 'Poor old Nelson! He'd be quite as much out of it as I am.'"

Shaw was staying with him for a couple of days, and they were both spending the evening with Franks. He was considerably their senior and had no sons, and the conversation had almost inevitably turned to bygone days in the navy, while the presence of Warren, his civilian brother-in-law, encouraged them to repeat old yarns which they might otherwise have spared one another from hearing, although it is by no means certain that they would have refrained. In some moods it might be an intolerable bore to listen to thrice-told tales and reminiscences which were of the nature of common property, or even to relate them

oneself, but in others it was quite as acceptable an amusement as the occasional repetition of a well-known air.

“Newspapers,” said Warren, “are never tired of telling us that the greatest change that has taken place in the navy is that formerly most of the money was spent on the personnel, and now it goes on the *matériel*. Very ugly material it is, too. A man-of-war was a glorious sight.”

“I used to think so,” agreed Shaw, “but really when I had a look in at some of the building-slips yesterday, and then went on to the Extension and looked at some of the old vessels, it struck me that they were all equally ugly—the whole box and dice of them.”

“Ah! but a ship half out of water and with no sails——”

“The truth is,” said Franks, “that when you are once out of it all you think more of the men you knew than of the ships they served in. You compare the men of different periods rather than the vessels. The education of naval officers and their daily life have changed in so many ways that their character is bound to be affected. Even the varying age at entry made inequalities and diversities which had widespread results. You might be nine or nineteen or nine-and-twenty.

“Hobbes’ uncle was at the battle of Trafalgar, but for a long time after that he was made attend a kind of dame-school whenever his ship was in

port. He wore uniform and bragged outrageously, and spent most of his time drawing pictures of the engagement. I saw him when he was over seventy, and he was still doing it, although in the meantime he had spent forty-five years in the army. He left the navy at seventeen. Stamper's eldest brother had his head knocked off by a cannon-ball when he was barely nine—the first-lieutenant had taken him aboard as an act of charity to his parents, who were in very low water at the time."

"He was taken off their hands with a vengeance!" said Shaw. "I knew one man who was brought in from the merchant service when he was close on forty-three to please the King of ——. Why it should have pleased him or anyone else I can't imagine, but that is nothing to the point. Three fellows were told off to examine him. They received such a very broad hint that he was to pass whatever happened that it put their monkey up, and they determined that even if the examination was a farce it should be a decent farce. That is to say, they were willing to confine themselves to questions he could answer—to begin with, they knew that he had never served in a square-rigged vessel in his life—but they drew the line at getting wrong answers and then signing a paper to say they had had right ones. They were in correspondence with the Admiralty for weeks as to the form the examination was to take, and extorted three contradictory sets of instructions.



When they were tired of the game they got private information and drew up their own paper, and he just managed to fill it in. After a decent interval he was put in a hulk on a mud-bank and left there. Of course there were heaps of men in the merchant service who had had a good professional education, but he wasn't among them. If he had been, in those days he would have been in too good a position financially to be eager to throw it up for no certainty but a few shillings a day half-pay. As to his scientific and literary education, few of us could afford to throw stones."

"The frequent interchange between the navy and the merchant service appears to have almost entirely ceased," said Warren. "It seems a loss to outsiders like myself, but I suppose it is the necessary result of higher organisation, specialisation, or whatever one should call it."

"At the present day it never answers to bring a man in from the merchant service unless he is quite young," said Langley, "and hardly then if he has no connexions in the navy. Discipline is utterly different, and it's absurdly difficult for them to pick up their bearings socially. Only the other day a man was qualifying for the naval reserve by doing a year's time as a lieutenant. Everyone wanted to be civil to him, and soon after he joined the paymaster asked him to go ashore with him and have a game of tennis. He actually went to one of the lieutenants and asked in all good earnest

if it was 'correct' for him to play tennis with a paymaster! In the merchant service the pursers have no position at all, and he hadn't the faintest idea that naval paymasters are much more often than not the sons and fathers and brothers and cousins of the executive."

"And how does it answer the other way round?" asked Warren.

"Worse, far worse. A naval man is hopelessly at sea on a merchant vessel. It is rarely worth while for them to try it except as captains of passenger ships, and even then they make rather a hash of it."

"Strictly speaking, I came in through the merchant service myself," said Shaw, "but even in those days I don't think it ever answered unless, as Langley says, you were quite young and knew the ropes in addition. On both sides I belonged to a backbone-of-the-navy family. The men on my mother's side had served to my knowledge from the time of Charles the Second. My parents were young and had heaps of children. I was the eldest son, and when I was about eight my father took me to see an old admiral. He said I was a pretty boy, set me on his knee, and asked what I was going to be. I said—it's all nonsense, you know, about cheeky youngsters being a modern invention—'I want to go into the navy, but not as a midshipman. I want to begin as a lieutenant.' The old man laughed, and my name

was put on a ship's books at once, and my father drew pay for me until I went away to school. Once during the holidays I started on a cruise in a very small vessel, but we were wrecked on the coast of Ireland, and some hotel-keeper's wife came down to the beach and took possession of me and kept me until I was claimed. I should know the place now if I saw it. She nearly killed me with overfeeding. I think it's sheer waste being a pretty boy—makes you expect too much of the world when you grow up.

“When I was fifteen my father died, and my poor mother didn't wish me to go to sea. She wanted me to be a doctor. I ran away to Liverpool, and shipped myself on a vessel going to Odessa. Five years later I was out in China, third mate of a big merchant ship. One day I navigated her up a river where a vessel of that size had never gone before. We had no chart, not even of the roughest description. The skipper was a man who was always boasting or swearing or drinking or saying his prayers. On this occasion he boasted no end, and said he could do it again with the biggest vessel ever launched, though as a matter of fact he had been drunk in his cabin all the time. Well, the commodore of the station heard of it, and sent for him to take up six men-of-war, as there was a disturbance in the place and he wanted to make a demonstration. The skipper was in a most awful funk : he knew he could not do it, and

he knew I must have done it more by good luck than good management, but he hadn't the face to refuse. He went aboard the flag-ship and took me with him. The captain was mortified enough that any man should come, but when he saw me—I was tall, but at that time looked younger than I was—he asked what in thunder I'd come for. The skipper mumbled out something, and the captain turned on his heel. The navigating-officer thought the skipper had been uncivilly treated, and asked him to come down and have a drink. That settled the matter: he returned looking wise as an owl, but quite speechless. He couldn't have given an order to save his life. The captain recovered his temper, and said: 'Take Saul below, and let us see what David can do.' I set my teeth and said to myself: 'If they *do* run aground, it's only mud.' I led the way, the rest followed as closely as they could, and all six were anchored before night-fall. The commodore sent for me; I explained how matters stood, and was allowed to re-enter."

"Hickes was another who came in through the merchant service," said Langley, "but it was rather before your time. His father was a country clergyman, and he went to sea at ten years of age. His mother and aunts knew so little of the business that they made him six dozen white shirts, which he popped for ginger-beer before they crossed the



line. A few months later he was out in South America. The crew mutinied, and they were all lodged in gaol. He was such a shrimp of a fellow that he wriggled through a drain-pipe and escaped, and no one troubled to look for him. He got work in a stable belonging to an hotel, and I suppose one of the guests picked him out. He was always the sort of fellow you would have noticed, more especially in rags."

"Parsons never understand anything about life at sea," said Shaw. "When I was about five-and-thirty I was going up to Liverpool, and one of them asked me to take his son with me and introduce him to the merchant skipper he was to sail with. He was a smart, handsome little fellow, got up like a stage-midshipman. I took him aboard; we both had lunch with the captain, and I left. Six months later, on the other side of the world, we entered the same port, and the skipper asked me to dinner. I thought I ought to go, just to see how the boy was getting on. A very grubby-looking lad waited on us, and stuck both his thumbs in my soup. *One* I was hardened to, as it was before the days of white-gloved mess-servants, every day of the week. Each time I looked at him he grinned. I felt rather annoyed, but I thought perhaps he had been given the job because he wasn't quite all there. After dinner we had a smoke, and I said: 'How's that young South getting on? I ought to have a look at him before I go.' The skipper burst out

laughing: 'Didn't you see him? No more cats *here* than can catch mice.'"

"I have heard that parsons' sons always made the best or the worst sailors," said Warren; "they have no idea of discipline."

"There's for you, Langley!" cried Shaw with mischievous satisfaction.

"Sometimes it's a good thing they haven't. Good for other people. Breaks up a bad tradition."

"So it does," said Franks, anxious to restore the peace that his brother-in-law had unwittingly disturbed. "I recollect that the first-lieutenant of a ship I was in ordered a midshipman, the son of a canon, to stand out on the bitts as a punishment. He said it was 'most derogatory,' and refused. The first-lieutenant reported him to the captain, who sent for him and called him, among other things, a young blackguard. He said: 'And you, sir, are a liar.' He was sent home for their Lordships' disposal, but he was the last midshipman who ever received such an order."

"I own that we did not take kindly to the one great law: Obey orders first and complain afterwards. It is rather a cunning doctrine, as after you have obeyed them it hardly ever seems worth while to enter a protest."

"People talk of the marvellous discipline that used to be maintained on a man-of-war," said Franks, "but to tell the truth there was mighty little that would pass for discipline at the present

day. The men were kept in order by main force, modified by tact. If the tact ran short there was a mutiny. I saw three before I had been in the service any time at all. I don't mean that the whole ship's company mutinied *en masse*, but so many of them were implicated that if we had not had marines at our backs with loaded muskets, it is difficult to say what the end would have been."

"When I joined," said Shaw, "the drunkenness among the officers was quite enough to prevent any steady control of the men. On board my first ship three of the wardroom officers were more often drunk than sober, and the captain was worse than any one of them. Up to the time I was quite a middle-aged man it was rare to find a ship where at least one of the principal officers was not a heavy drinker and a perpetual nuisance to the mess, and there would be three or four who occasionally took too much. Even ashore I have seen officers in uniform, half-seas over, rolling about like an old seventy-four in a gale of wind. I remember two brothers, one in the army and one in the navy, who used to stagger down Portsmouth High Street arm-in-arm, in full uniform, and so drunk that if they had let go of one another for a moment they would have fallen flat on the pavement."

"In those days sobriety was a positive virtue," said Franks. "Any man who possessed it was almost certain to rise."

“And now it’s a mere negation ; if you’re not sober, out you go.”

“Even the stupidity engendered by the ‘little too much’ constantly repeated is not tolerated, and the distinction between being drunk and being drunk on duty is practically lost, and quite right, too. Potentially a man must always be on duty.”

“And a sharp look-out is kept on the wine bills,” said Langley, “but it does not work with absolute fairness. No hard-and-fast system ever could. In my day wine bills to a great extent were bills for wine, and now they seldom are.”

“I don’t know that men are any more sober at heart now than they were then,” said Franks. “The monotony and the bad food and bad water were responsible for most of the drinking. The second day out from port we were on weevilly biscuit. There are men still living who have never lost the trick of turning biscuit round and round between the finger and thumb of their left hand and tapping it on the cloth.”

“I have seen some of them do it with a piece of bread when they went to a Company dinner in London to return thanks for the navy,” said Warren.

“And to this hour if there are two water-bottles on the table I don’t help myself from the nearest—I feel compelled to have it from the fullest.”



“ So do I,” agreed both his younger messmates, and Langley added :

“ A teetotaller could hardly have lived : even seven-water grog killed the visible insects and made them sink to the bottom of the glass. My wine bills averaged thirty pounds a year for thirty years, and I only just escaped being looked on as a ridiculously abstemious man.”

“ How about the cooking and the serving and all that kind of thing ? ” asked Warren, who knew that he was regarded by the ascetic Franks as something of a gourmet, even if not a gourmand, but was in no way affected by his opinion.

“ The serving didn’t add to the attractiveness of the cooking,” said Shaw, always as fastidious as was possible for a healthy man in hard training. “ There are lots of fellows left still who can hardly endure to pour anything into a tumbler until they have held it up to the light. I often do it myself when my thoughts wander, and it used to be said that you could detect a naval man anywhere, because he gave his plate a violent push with his thumb when he wanted it changed. It was the established signal. Even if there were so many men that they were tumbling over one another behind your chair, you hardly ever got anything till you asked for it.”

“ The first place where I ever saw any decent waiting at mess was in China,” said Langley. “ With Oriental servants it is a point of honour

that you shall never miss them—they always instruct their successors. If the whole of them left after lunch, the set who brought in afternoon-tea knew which of us took sugar, and how much. Of course they had their own idea of discipline. If they wanted leave they never dreamed of asking for it: you had a substitute, and what more could you want? And most likely you never noticed it. My son tells me that they try it on even in the engine-room, but their old engineer has had to deal with a great many of them; and when you are once accustomed to Chinamen they are no more alike than sheep or babies. One day he pounced on a man: ‘You are not Li-Ho.’ ‘No,’ said the fellow calmly, ‘Li-Ho belly him father.’”

“Warren asks about the cooking,” said Franks; “how do you think he would have liked it, Shaw?”

“I don’t know where the cooks came from: I know where they were often sent! I recollect one very practical course of instruction. There was a general outcry against the peasoup. The captain tasted it, and then put a sentry over the cook until he had eaten it all. And for weeks and months at a stretch what was there to cook? The beef and pork-junk was as salt as fire. When fresh water could not be spared to soak it out, I have seen meat tied to a line and towed for miles in the wake of the vessel. How could men have lived without drinking more than they do now? On the other hand, smoking was a much less

general practice. When I was about three-and-twenty I thought it time to begin, and pictured the delights of coming off watch on a cold night and falling asleep with a pipe in my mouth. We happened to be at Havana soon after, and I bought ten thousand cigars. I found that each cigar meant two glasses of brandy and water, and neither my health nor my pocket would stand it. Franks took a lot of them off my hands ; he used to be considered a regular furnace. What made you gave it up ? ”

Franks seemed unwilling to reply, but Langley struck in :

“ I recollect the very day he gave it up. He was sitting opposite a fellow who had already had too much and ordered another glass. Franks remonstrated, and he leant across the table and rapped the bowl of his pipe : ‘ Thash *your* way o’ takin’ too much.’ Franks finished his pipe and laid it down, and said : ‘ I’ll never smoke another.’ And he never did. It was a real self-denying ordinance, and of course the other fellow came to grief all the same ”

A look of pain was added to Franks’ embarrassment, and Shaw hastened to change the subject.

“ Harking back to what Franks was saying about the different age at entry, this will just show you, Warren, how things have changed. A few days after my wife’s father died I attended the First Lord’s levee—a thing that came to an end

long since—and I stood behind two old men whose chests were hardly wide enough for all their decorations, and one said to the other : ‘ So poor old John Cory is gone ? Well, well, well, what changes and chances there are in the service ! Yes, yes, yes. He entered as the pet midshipman of a man with more interest than any three men you could name. I entered as a schoolmaster. Heaven only knows what *you* entered as. And yet here are we both admirals, and he’s died an old coastguard-lieutenant.’ Men used to take any rating they could get in those days, and then hold on till some vacancy occurred, and you can’t draw any sure conclusion as to what their social position really was. I knew a man who might be living now as far as age is concerned, and he entered as captain’s-coxswain to his own father.”

“ Changes and chances seems the best way of describing arrangements of that kind,” said Warren. “ One more trifling change that has struck me very much, visiting my brother-in-law at long intervals, is that at the present day one rarely sees a naval uniform worn except under compulsion.”

“ I recollect that my wife’s father went to church every Sunday adorned with a cocked-hat, epaulettes, and sword. I think I wore out one cocked-hat myself, but there are men now who have hardly had one on their heads except on the west coast of Africa. A young relative of mine was



out there, and a black servant shut his up with a cheese in a tin case; but three days after he had to land to call on a Governor, so not much harm was done. Anywhere else the hat and the cheese might have fought it out together for weeks. I remember the last time I ever wore uniform except on duty. My ship came in unexpectedly, and I went home for a few hours without stopping to change. My young sister-in-law made me take her to hear a celebrated preacher who was causing a good bit of excitement locally by prophesying that the end of the world would take place in eleven weeks. There was an awful crowd, and we had to sit in the gallery. Towards the end she said she felt faint, and I had to lead her out among whispers of 'Buttons is clearing out before the collection!' I felt rather savage, and when an old lady stopped us in the road and asked if I believed the date had been exactly calculated, I said: 'All I can tell you is, that the preacher has just bought the remainder of a ninety-nine years' lease from the father of a messmate of mine, and he showed it to him signed, sealed, and delivered. There are forty-seven years to run, and the man paid the full market value.'"

"The last time I wore it was at Woolwich Arsenal station," said Langley. "I was standing on the platform waiting for someone, and a train was just starting. Almost at the last moment a major in the Royal Engineers jumped in, and then turned on me and said, 'Why the devil don't you

shut the door ?' I said, 'Why the devil should I ?' It was a mere question on my part ; at the moment I couldn't conceive why he expected me to do it. I suppose he did it himself when he recovered the shock, but as long as the train was in sight the door was flapping."

"A few years later that kind of thing was always happening at railway stations," said Shaw. "I recollect a fat, fussy, four-stripe Engineer who had to go a dozen miles by rail occasionally with Blissett to attend courts-martial, and all the old country-women going home from market would mob him on the platform and ask if the next train was theirs, and if it stopped at every station. He used to get awfully mad over it. They treated Blissett in the same way, but he didn't care a hang. He tucked his sword under his arm and hobnobbed with the old souls until the station-master came and saved them from his misdirections, and locked him into his carriage, and told the guard to put him out at the right station. He always lost his bearings on shore. Naturally when there was so much continuous sea service men got more completely out of the run of things than they do now. I remember when I came back from China after seven years' absence and I wanted to go from Portsmouth to Plymouth. It was the first time in my life that I had even been inside a railway station. I asked the fellow for a ticket, and he said: 'First, second, or third ?' Well, I thought

trains were like coaches, and that you paid for speed. I had none too much money to spare, but of course I was in a hurry to get home, so I said 'First.' Imagine my disgust when I found that all three classes went in the same train ! ”

“ Even boys won't wear uniform now except in a naval port,” said Langley. “ When Blissett's son was on the *Britannia* he tried to make him stick to it in the holidays, because the boy was growing rapidly and he thought it waste to buy plain clothes just for a few weeks. Besides, he was a beautiful boy, and his mother thought it 'suited him so well.' One day she sent him to a friend's house with a message. The mistress was out, and the housemaid, after hearing what he had to say, bawled down the kitchen stairs: 'Cook ! Mrs. Blissett's sent her Buttons to ast—' He was a sweet-tempered little chap, but hardly old enough at the moment to feel amused, and Blissett had to give in.”

“ That lad was about the last born sailor I ever saw,” said Shaw. “ At thirteen he could bring a boat alongside as smartly as if he had been double the age, and at fifteen he had as good an idea of taking care of his ship as any man aboard. I don't call a man a born sailor if he has no love for his ship, and that kind of thing is quite out of date. Only the other day a young relative of mine was given a command, and what do you suppose was the first thing he did ? Made out a list of seventeen

‘ radical defects ’ and got the admiral to forward it ! In my day a man would as soon have done such a thing to the wife he had married as the ship he commanded. And the first, too ! Why even Langley—I recollect a fellow was given a command, and Langley called it an unseaworthy, rat-forsaken, rotten old tub. Well, for some reason or other the appointment was cancelled and the ship was given to Langley, and he spent two of the best years of his life trying to prove that she was faultless if properly handled.”

“ So she was,” said Langley obstinately. “ See her rise to a wave ! ”

Shaw refused to be diverted from his course by the interruption, and finished the yarn as coolly as if Langley were invisible.

“ Years afterwards she was dug out of the Extension for some temporary purpose, and a cousin of Hobbes had her, and Langley went out to Spithead to see her sail, but there was a capful of wind, and the fellow refused to leave his moorings. An hour or two later Langley was walking along the Hard in a fearful rage and met the man’s wife. She rushed up to him, and said : ‘ Oh, I hope Herbert has not gone out in this frightful weather ? ’ ‘ No, no, don’t be anxious—’ ‘ And in that *awful* old ship.’ Langley’s temper got the better of him, and he shouted : ‘ He isn’t gone, and he’s the only man in the service who would have refused.’ ”



“So he was,” said Langley, still unrepentant. “His wife said she would never speak to me again. I only wish she hadn’t, but she insisted on forgiving me. A most wearisome woman.”

“I think we could have borne with a little more of that kind spirit in the old days,” said Franks. “There was stuff enough in that incident for a dozen service quarrels. When one looks back on it all I think what strikes one most is the childish absurdity of many of the quarrels. I remember one day the captain’s dog snarled at a boy, and the boy kicked it. The captain’s cook kicked the boy. The boatswain roared, ‘Isn’t a boy worth more than a dog?’ and kicked the cook. What happened next I don’t know, but a few minutes later the doctor kicked the paymaster. No one took *his* part, so he kicked the doctor, and luckily that ended the business.’”

“I should think that the real root of the matter was the bad cooking,” said Warren. “With three good meals a day seven days a week I have passed for a good-tempered man, but I believe I should have been murderous on salt-junk and spirits and putrid water and weevilly biscuit.”

“No doubt the appalling tempers that men used to have, and the way they brooded over grievances, arose chiefly from the physical hardships of the life. I believe that most of poor Byam’s crankiness dated from that awful time when pretty nearly half the ship’s company died of yellow

fever, and half of the remainder were unfit for duty. If he had been through a six-weeks' siege, with the enemy picking off the garrison day and night, and never able to get a shot in in return, people would have remembered it all his life, and made some allowance for him."

"What I found so exasperating was his detailed inaccuracy," said Langley. "Of course I can see now that his brain must have been a bit touched. I remember saying to you once, 'I can't stand the fellow. He's such a confounded liar,' and you said: 'No, no; he's truthful enough. We all have selective memories.' It was a bullet that found its billet."

"I don't think I can have meant the shot for you. I must have been speaking in a general way."

"Do you think the average physique of the men has altered much?" asked Warren, his thoughts still dwelling on the vital matter of diet.

"I think the men have altered more with regard to height than in any other respect," replied his brother-in-law. "Family measure I was 'nearly six feet,' Government measure just a hair's-breadth short of five-foot-ten, and I assure you that very few of my contemporaries could look down on me. Five-foot-eight or nine was considered a very fair height, and I had several messmates who barely turned five feet. I don't know that the life had stunted them; it may simply have

been that they entered when they were so young that no one knew how they would shape."

"It was the same in the Marines," said Langley. "I was shipmates with one who entered when he was fifteen and very small for his age, and never grew—except in girth. He couldn't keep step, had to slip in five strides to other men's three; but he got on well enough until he became a field-officer, and then he couldn't be let mount a horse in view of his regiment. He had to be hoisted on somewhere out of sight. One day at a general inspection he was thrown, and although he was quite unhurt he couldn't manage to scramble up again, and they made him retire."

"It's just as awkward to be bigger than your messmates," said Shaw. "I'm no height at all compared with the youngsters I see knocking about the place now, but I've often served on ships where I could only stand upright between the beams. The most unhappy shipmate I ever had was six-foot-two. We were out in Borneo and there was a military expedition, and he was ordered to go on boat-duty up a river. He went to the captain and remonstrated: 'Consider my length, sir. Boats are built to suit men half a foot or more shorter than I am. I shall be a misery to myself and a nuisance to everyone.' The captain said: 'You'll go, or you'll go home!'—and he went home. I took his place. Three weeks in an open boat: ague by night, sunstroke by day.

The only fighting men we saw were wasps. The river was so narrow that often our oars disturbed a nest. At first we fought them wildly, but we soon learnt that the only thing to be done was to throw ourselves flat on our faces till the excitement was over."

"No fighting at all?" asked Warren.

"We burnt a little powder when we got to our journey's end, but not much. The fellows only wanted to run away, and we let 'em do it. In businesses of that kind what you really have to be on the look-out for is fever. It bowled a great many of our men over, and we lost several after we got back—the strongest among them, too."

"In the matter of physique I wonder if we have gone as much ahead as some people would have us believe?" said Franks. "Up to a certain point health and strength are one and the same thing, but not beyond it. The crux is to raise that point. Men are healthier than they used to be, but I doubt if they are as strong. How many of them could endure the old conditions of life on board ship, even for a few weeks, and if it were a matter of sheer necessity? The smell of the lower decks in the morning was unforgettable, even when you had smelt a slaver and the opening of the ice-house on a West India mail-packet."

"Or a ragged school on a wet day," suggested Langley, who had sometimes been drawn into works of charity by his wife.



“I remember a case in point,” said Warren. “A cousin of mine, a colonel in the Indian army, told me that he saw a regiment of soldiers brought home from India on board an ordinary man-of-war which already had her full complement. The voyage, for some reason or other, lasted half as long again as usual, and those unlucky fellows only once had their clothes off. Matters were getting rather desperate, and the captain put the ship about and had sails lowered into the water to keep the sharks off, and they all had a bathe. And in spite of all that there were no deaths, and only the usual amount of sickness. It seems to me that nothing would ever pay men for enduring things like that—I mean even the men who had the best accommodation in the ship.”

“No one ever tried to pay us,” said Langley drily. “Taking it all through, we had about half what men get now. Pay and retirements and so forth are on a much more liberal scale than they were. I can remember heaps of old admirals, mostly bachelors, who had only £300 a year. It is true that it was not always substantive rank, many of them had not served since they were commanders, and not much then.”

“Regular pay is higher,” agreed Shaw, “but then other gains and allowances are practically stopped. When I was on the west coast of Africa my prize-money for the eighteen months exactly equalled my pay, and if I had been in command

it would have far exceeded it. I did happen to see a prize-list the other day. The single shares were worth one penny; I forget how many shares would have fallen to a lieutenant, but about enough to pay for a whisky-and-soda. In the first China war, although I was quite a youngster I was given £40 batta-money, an allowance meant to cover damage to uniform. In the second, though naturally I held a much more important post, my share was £16. Of course to pick up much money you had to be in command. I brought home treasure once, a few bars of gold that I had nailed under my wash-stand, and that never cost me a second thought, and I was given nearly £200 for my trouble. Another time I was second in command with two million dollars in silver on board, a most awful responsibility, and I never had a penny."

"But then incalculable expenses have stopped also," said Franks. "They were a heavy trial to a man like myself, who not only had to live on his pay but a long way within it. On joining a mess I nearly always had to pay about £30, and on leaving it I thought myself lucky if I got £8; and if one was in and out of a good many ships the loss came to something considerable. Then, although the nominal charge for messing was almost as firmly fixed as it is now, there was much less supervision. Three times within a year I have known a mess meeting called, and the caterer announced that

the mess was in debt, and each time we had to pay up six or eight pounds per head."

"What amounts to a practical reduction of income," said Langley, "is the increased cost of setting your sons out in the world. Until within the last few years any ordinary boy of thirteen or fourteen could pass into the navy straight from any ordinary school, and after that you might safely calculate that he would not want more than a thousand pounds from you. At a pinch it might be done for seven or eight hundred, and if money was scarce, or if you could not get a nomination in time, there was always the navigating branch. If you wanted to make him a doctor, which was usually the second choice of a father who had very little beyond his pay, he began at sixteen; and if he took his degree in Edinburgh or Dublin, after studying in London, you could have him in the navy or the army and quite off your hands by the time he was twenty-two."

"It certainly used to be a great deal easier for widows in the old days," said Shaw. "I knew one who was left with a young son and hardly anything but her pension. She went to a post-captain, an old friend of her husband, and asked him to take her boy as a clerk's assistant. He said he had no vacancy except for a naval cadet, but he would be glad to let the boy have it. The poor woman said she was much obliged, but it was far beyond her means. He said: 'In point of fact everything is

beyond your means, and you may as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb. Beat a drum, and go round and tell all your relatives that the nomination is yours if they will guarantee even £40 a year. You'll find they'll give it like a shot to put him in the executive, although they won't spend a farthing to make him a purser.' She followed his advice, and the boy became an admiral."

"The accountant line used to cost almost nothing," said Langley. "It was the usual resource of widows, or a makeshift for a third or fourth son. I don't know what it used to cost to make a man an engineer; none of my messmates ever did it. They remembered the days when engineers messed apart till they were quite middle-aged men, and the young ones blacked the boots of the old ones. Prejudices like that die hard. They were a rough set, especially those who married early in life, when they had a very limited choice, though a percentage of them were as good as any you can find now, look where you may. The days are not so very far back when if you had a chief-engineer who could pass muster and did not drink to excess, and a doctor with a London degree, and a chaplain who had seen a university even through the wrong end of a spy-glass, you thought yourself blessed above all the rest of the fleet."

"Everyone was rougher," said Franks. "If some of the old admirals that I can remember were to reappear, even the most harmless part of



their manners would create vast astonishment. I recollect a commander-in-chief who only ate twice a day—and it was a fearful sight. When you thought he *must* have finished dinner, he broke up a half-quartern loaf and munched it like a horse.”

“And it was cheaper to put a boy into the army, too. Clever lads passed in without any special preparation, and it was an understood thing that you gave them an allowance for eight or ten years, and then they must stand on their own feet. Only very exceptional men can do it now.”

“The navy was rather a close borough,” said Franks. “Just a percentage belonged to the titled classes and hoped to swoop off all the prizes, and most of the rest belonged to naval families in their third or fourth or fifth generation. There was a general belief that sailors’ sons made the best sailors, and therefore naval officers should be encouraged to let their sons follow them.”

“I never wholly accepted the doctrine,” said Shaw. “Sailors’ sons settled down to the life more readily and with less wastage, but, as far as my personal experience goes, all the men who really left their mark came in from outside and had no previous connection with the service.”

“I could prove anything under the sun from my personal experience,” said Langley.

“How do you account for the fact?” asked Warren. Shaw made no verbal reply: facts were

facts ; it was not his business to account for them.

“ My theory is that a kind of paralysing melancholy seizes men who have been too much at sea,” said Franks. “ Sometimes it runs its whole course in a single lifetime, but usually it takes two or three generations to develop.”

“ I wonder who originated the expression ‘ jolly sailor,’ ” said Warren, “ and how it is that the myth has such extraordinary vitality.”

“ No facts can kill it,” said Langley. “ I know three dear old women living at Leamington who have a nephew in the navy, ‘ the first for five generations.’ He is one of the most gloomy, saturnine persons I ever came across. His cast of countenance and his small-talk—when he has any—remind me of a stickit-minister turned lawyer that I met in Edinburgh. He is a teetotalter and never plays cards for money, and he married, when he was quite young, a woman slightly older than himself, and has no end of children, and very little to give them. He has been wherever he was sent, and stayed as long as he was told, but he has never heard a shot fired in anger, and he has got on by sheer force of brains. Although he is middle-aged, and his name is not even John, those dear old souls persist in speaking of him as ‘ our sailor nephew Jack ’ ; and in their mind’s eye I am sure they see him rolling along the street slightly the worse for drink and trolling a rowdy song, or else

boarding a pirate with a cutlass between his teeth."

"If a man is not naturally cheerful I'm blessed if I can see what there is in the life to make him so," said Shaw; "while if it happens to be his disposition there are a dozen things to knock it out of him before he is any age at all. I've known four generations of naval officers, and I can only call to mind one man remarkable for his cheerfulness—and he had so little reason for it that I doubt if he was quite sane. He had two brothers in the service. The elder one went melancholy mad and cut his throat, and the younger had the kind of temper that makes other men run amok. He exasperated one ordinary, good-natured young fool to such a degree that he tore his commission to tatters and flung it on the floor in front of him.

"The admiral patched it up—I mean the whole affair. That used to be one of the great injustices of the service. Nothing short of concerted mutiny or deliberate murder would induce some men to order a court-martial, while others would send their secretary round to nose out quarrels and foment them. After admirals were deprived of the patronage of court-martial vacancies they lost all interest in stirring up strife. They held on to the invaliding vacancies for some time after that, but even those were a temptation. Often a billet would be given to a man who could not decently be passed over, but on the secret understanding that he

invalided within a certain time. Then, when he was disposed of, the berth was given to the favourite for whom it had been intended all the time. Death vacancies was the last bit of patronage taken away. As far as I know, admirals always stopped short of murder, but it was just as well to make a clean sweep."

"Among the men quarrels did sometimes end in murder," said Franks. "Fellows would get a hatred for one another that was nothing short of madness. I heard of one case where two men could not set eyes on one another without fighting, even in the presence of the captain and half the officers. At last they were both drowned trying to save the same man."

"I know it to my cost, Franks, especially as I have always shared your views about capital punishment. On board the second ship that I commanded one man deliberately killed another, walking the whole length to choose his weapon, and after he was in irons he planned to kill a second whom he hated equally, and almost succeeded. It was this fellow's duty to wait on him, and he pretended his leg-irons hurt him, and while he knelt down to readjust them he struck him on the head until he fell senseless.

"He was hanged a few days later. I was simply besieged with applications from people, women as well as men, who wanted to be present. I should have had some satisfaction in stringing



*them* up! The only person I allowed aboard was a newspaper reporter. He said it was the most decent and humane execution he had ever witnessed. Take it how you like, the world is a horrible place, and the chief difference between us is that some people are not found out."

"Sometimes you could hardly wonder that senior officers tried to hush matters up and avoid the scandal of a court-martial," said Langley, "though it usually led to a bigger scandal in the end. There must be a *first* time when a fellow does a shady thing, but I doubt if there is ever an *only* time. One afternoon out in Halifax I was on deck talking to the commander when a mate came up with the usual form: 'Can I go ashore, sir?' Leave was given, he saluted, and was turning away when the commander said sharply: 'What's that lump on your chest? It's quite a disfigurement.' The mate changed colour, and I should have been more surprised if he hadn't. It was an amazing thing to say, and doubly amazing coming from him, as he was one of the civillest little fellows imaginable. Generally speaking, a small man has about as much manners as a cock-robin. 'It's my cigar-case, sir.' 'Remarkably bulky. Let's have a look at it.' He drew it out and handed it over. It was a leather case that may or may not have been meant for cigars, but it was cram-full of coarse money. There must have been twenty ounces or more. 'You had

better not take this ashore,' the commander said; 'I'll look after it for you.' The mate turned away without a word, and I felt that I had been caught as a witness in an exceedingly nasty case.

"It appeared that early that morning a first-class petty officer reported to the commander that during the night the whole of his money, rather over five pounds in silver, had been stolen from him. He told him to say nothing and keep a good look-out. When the money was counted up it came to the precise sum that the petty officer had lost, minus half a crown. Inquiries were made; a man came forward and said that the mate had given him half a crown that morning for slinging his hammock, and he produced the coin. A few days previously the caterer had pressed the mate to pay his outstanding mess bills, and he had protested that he had no money at all, and would have none until the following month. Nevertheless the matter was hushed up."

"Yes, one blames them," said Franks, "but I know from an experience of my own that it is a natural instinct. As a young fellow I was wine caterer in one mess, and I was troubled by several small losses of money from the cash-box. I got a new one with a better lock, and kept the key under my pillow. I was known to be rather a heavy sleeper, but the matter worried me so much that I slept more as a sailor was expected to sleep

in those days, with one eye open. One night I felt a hand fumbling under my head. I gripped it, and sang out for a light. When the first flicker touched the man, I let go with a run and said I'd had nightmare. The world never seemed quite the same again."

"Franks is looking awfully old," said Langley to Shaw as they came away together, "I dare say he thought the same of us."

Langley's thoughts wandered a little further.

"Do you still go to funerals in the winter? Now I'm turned sixty-five I only go—oh, well, I thought you liked talking about that kind of thing."

"Leave off!" said Shaw in tones that carried his shipmate back some forty years, and he said apologetically:

"When Franks goes you'll be my oldest friend here on earth. It's enough to make me feel a little cantankerous and contrairy."

Shaw smiled unwillingly: "You always had rather a 'doobersome' way of putting things."

"What's wrong with Shaw?" Langley asked his wife after their guests had departed. "He has lost all taste for wills and executors and advance-payment for graves, I thought he would have flung me off the pavement last night when I mentioned a funeral."

"I wonder he didn't."

"Surely you don't mean his wife? Franks and

Warren said she was 'as young as ever,' and I almost thought so myself."

"I believe he knows that she will soon be much younger."

"Good Lord! He'll be a worse handful for us than any of his widows and orphans have been for him."



## XII. NEAR HORIZONS

History—Astronomy—Mathematics—Languages—Literature—  
Music—Painting—Architecture—Sociology—Taxation—Educa-  
tion—Foreign politics—Social prejudices—Theology—Social  
duties

**I**T was sometimes difficult for those who only heard the group of old shipmates talking together, or with a civilian who confined the conversation to subjects that they understood or to certain aspects of matters that closely affected them, to realise in how many directions they found the world a sterile promontory, a mere blank devoid of rational interest. They scarcely knew the barest outlines of ancient history, and of modern European history even less. Except for events within their own memory or that of their parents they were almost entirely ignorant of English history, whether social, political, military, religious, or literary, and even these personal recollections supplied them with curious details, rather than a connected or reasoned account.

Interest in politics developed—if at all—late in life; it was strongly partisan and of a wholly indiscriminating nature. Right was on one side, wrong on the other; there were no good men in

the enemy's camp, and no benefit to the country could possibly be derived from the action of your political opponents. Civilians might pardonably hold other views, as they had not the same opportunities of enlightenment, but a man of their own cloth who differed from them could never have been worthy to wear it.

Geography was mainly learned by voyaging, and in their mental maps countries with no coast-line were an indefinite blur. Meteorology was also to a great extent acquired by experience: if you had previously served in such-and-such latitudes you "knew what to expect." If you had not you must listen to those who had, and use your own discretion as to whether you would be guided by their advice. As "weather-prophets" on shore they were absolutely useless. Most of them foretold fine weather when they intended to go some distance from home, and bad weather when they preferred remaining indoors. The strictly accurate frankly confessed that to foretell changes of weather on shore is much more difficult than at sea, as more factors have to be taken into consideration, and gave up all pretension to the art.

Some knowledge of astronomy was general among them, but it was usually confined to such portions as were of practical use in daily life at sea. On a fine night, as they walked home from church or club or whist-party, they might cast a glance at the

heavens and say in tones of friendly recognition, "There's old So-and-so: I haven't seen him lately," but neighbours who painfully studied astronomy were hardly regarded as sane. It was a chilly, uncomfortable occupation, and "What business is it of theirs? What does it lead to?"

Elementary mathematics were familiar to most of them, but the very existence of physical science was unknown or unrealised.

Their knowledge of languages was as a rule confined to the remnants of such Latin as had been reluctantly acquired before the age of twelve or thirteen, and a limited but practically useful acquaintance with French, while a small proportion had a smattering of Spanish or Italian.

The lack of classical education inevitably affected their knowledge of literature, but did not fully account for its excessively narrow limits. With such chapters of the Bible as form part of the church-service they were so familiar that their frequent use of its phraseology was usually quite unconscious, but few of them had read any other portions or any book of the Apocrypha. They possessed a few works of scriptural exegesis, generally the gift of chaplains with whom they had been on friendly terms, but these bore no signs of use though outwardly injured by climate and travel.

Some of them disapproved of novel reading, and nearly all of them affected to despise it, but they

had all owed more hours' pleasure to Scott, Dumas, Marryat, and the earlier writings of Dickens and Thackeray than they were willing to acknowledge, and translations of *Don Quixote* and *Gil Blas* must have been common possessions, if one may judge from their quotations and references.

Essayists were little read, and poetry was a despised art. The only conceivable use of verse was as a mnemonic; to assist their memory they nearly all had doggerel compositions, in which they found great satisfaction. They fully sympathised with their young relatives' indignation when lessons in literature became part of the ordinary teaching on board the *Britannia*, and were pleased with the tactful instructor who soothed the boys' wounded feelings by assuring them that the verses they were called on to learn by heart "were ballads, not poetry."

Music was regarded as an occupation for angels and young women and professionals. It was just permissible for a man to like listening to any of these, or even for him to sing, provided that he never practised and was unable to play his own accompaniments. To touch any musical instrument was an effeminacy, but it was sometimes condoned in surgeons, paymasters, and chaplains, or even marines, if they played from ear or from memory. Few of them seemed to have the faintest conception that music demands serious study, and that they could not expect to be able to appreciate



its more highly developed forms without having undergone this discipline.

A practical knowledge of drawing and painting was commonly found among them, but landscape was the only branch they at all understood or much admired. They seldom visited picture-galleries, and even men like Heseltine knew very little of the history of art. Occasionally they would form a strong attachment to a single picture, go to see it whenever they had the opportunity, and carry some cheap reproduction of it wherever they went, but although this work was generally one of the world's great treasures their feeling for it had but little connection with its artistic value.

Architecture affected them to an extremely small degree, in fact only those who had served in the Mediterranean seemed clearly conscious that the art existed. Abroad one went ashore "for the sake of walking," and looked at a few buildings by the way. In England a castle was merely an unshapely heap of stones which could not face modern weapons, and had therefore most properly been allowed to fall into a state of ruin; a palace was an inconveniently large house in which "poor Prince So-and-so" was condemned to live; and a cathedral was a church where it was rather difficult to hear what was said, but where it was not necessary to keep a very bright look-out, as you were tolerably safe from innovations or priestly assumptions. A fine bridge extorted

admiration, perhaps because they understood some of the difficulties of construction.

Their views of sociology were unbelievably crude ; in their lack of appreciation of the extreme complexity of social life most of them could have given points to a radical cobbler or a self-taught artisan. They argued in much the same way, clinging to isolated " facts " (seldom verified, and not always verifiable) and from these drew bold and wide conclusions. One characteristic assertion frequently made was this : " When I was a boy the poorhouse in Portsmouth was a very small building, and look at it now ! Pauperism has enormously increased."

Although in some moods professing to despise laws and law-makers, in others they seemed to have boundless faith in Acts of Parliament, especially if backed up by drastic penalties. There may have been no real self-contradiction in this, as the regulations they advocated were generally for the prevention of disorder.

In general terms they expressed profound and entire distrust of the working-classes, who seemed to be exclusively composed of idle, dishonest, shiftless, thriftless, drunken persons, most unaccountably permitted to live apart from all discipline, whether that provided by nature or with the improvements thereon suggested by the Queen's Regulations. These opinions had no effect upon their intercourse with any members

of those classes ; it was usually friendly and trustful, as every man with whom they had exchanged fifty words was "quite an exception to the rule. A very decent, hard-working fellow. I'm sure I don't know how he keeps his head above water on such miserable pay : he must have an excellent wife." In the abstract the most villainous of all workmen were those who had anything to do with house-building, plumbing, or decoration, and it was necessary to "keep an eye on them" incessantly. When it came to practice : "Of course I shouldn't like to give any ordinary paperers and painters the run of the place, but Robinson employs most respectable men. I just keep out of the way till the work is finished."

They expected unbroken and invariable civility from their servants, but as they very rarely failed to treat them courteously their demands were constantly and punctually met. Next to showing plain and direct rudeness they would have counted it a crime to harass any subordinate, and one rule of prudent discipline that they were always trying to impress upon their wives and daughters was : "Never find fault with a servant just back from leave. They can't stand it. They may seem firm enough on their feet, but you don't know what they have had to drink. Wait till the next morning. Aboard ship when any man came back from leave I looked the other way. I never saw him."

As a rule the naval men of this period were eager to pay their debts to shopkeepers and tradesmen of all kinds, and although they frequently quoted the proverb about the two bad paymasters they could hardly be restrained from paying in advance, and the fact that men in a large way of business preferred receiving their money in the ordinary course to having it thrust on them at any odd moment was quite beyond their grasp.

Often the most harmless and necessary ways of retail trade were an offence to them. If Shaw hesitated over a purchase, and the owner thought to settle matters by lowering the price, he at once left the shop. "To have two prices is only fit for a Chinaman or an Indian." Another man when told that a half-pint bottle of a certain mixture cost three shillings, but that the seller would be glad to supply a pint bottle for five shillings, replied: "Then if I buy half a pint you rob me of sixpence." That the price of similar articles should be altered, even if years had elapsed between two purchases, was a most suspicious circumstance. A London tailor was once called to account by an old naval man, and scored a victory. "What would you charge for a dustcoat like the one I am wearing? Phew! Why your predecessor made it the year before last for thirty per cent. less. How do you account for that?" "By my predecessor's speedy bankruptcy, sir," replied the tailor, and booked the order.



They resented paying taxes, and were firmly convinced that most of the money was wasted, but at the same time they thought it a duty to set an example to the presumably lax civilian by paying them at the earliest possible moment. In fact if they were not among the first to arrive at the office the collector formed the gravest opinion of their state of health, and took an early opportunity to make respectful inquires. They liked to receive his never-failing assurance that "if everyone were like them" tax-gathering would be a temptingly easy business.

Schools were chiefly looked on as places where boys too big to spend their days in play could be kept out of mischief until they were old enough for real work. The art of teaching was unrecognised, and there was no mystery in the discipline of the young. Boys who wished to learn could learn anywhere, and boys who were determined not to learn would not learn wherever you sent them. The fact that the vast majority of boys were between these two classes was not taken into their calculations. Boys were merely the raw material of men, and some of it must inevitably be spoilt in the process of manufacture.

From the time sons were seven or eight until they were four or five-and-twenty there was often a great deal of apparent coldness and indifference, though anything in the nature of open disagreement was extremely rare. After that age they

drew together, and by the time sailors' sons were thirty they could generally accept them as equals.

At heart they had much sympathy with boys who did not wish to learn, and sincerely pitied their children for having to submit to a larger amount of formal education than had fallen to their own share. The constant question was: "What is the use of it? What good will it be to them?" To learn more than was needed for immediate practical purposes seemed to them sheer folly. A disinterested love of learning, if comprehensible at all, was only comprehensible in women, who would never be called on to earn their own living. It "filled up their time," but men had more serious business in hand.

Opinions as to the characteristics of foreign nations were firmly held, though, to judge from the evidence produced, the foundations for these convictions was exceedingly slight. England was pictured as a lamb among wolves, a dove among serpents. She was surrounded by foreign enemies of superhuman cunning, always deceived and outwitted, foolishly content with the shell while others devoured the oyster. When one of Langley's sons was considered old enough to speak in the council of his elders he said: "Is England quite as foolish as you think? I have been pretty well all over the world, and it seems to me that, one way or another, she has secured about all that is worth having."

His opinion was dismissed as that of a cynical youth lamentably injured by having spent part of his schooldays in Germany, though it was duly placed to his credit that he had acquired but little of the language, and seemed to have retained nothing but a few apparently harmless expletives.

They had many social prejudices. Lawyers were deeply distrusted, especially those who went regularly to church, or took any share in public movements of a charitable nature. Doctors were chiefly humbugs, but there was no great danger in knowing them as long as you did not employ them. There was a superficial dislike and suspicion of soldiers, but the smallest intercourse was generally sufficient to brush it away. It probably dated from the time when the proportion of soldiers not compelled to take their profession in earnest was very large, and the proportion of moneyed men among sailors extremely small.

With regard to the clergy, they seemed unable to separate the man and his office; even if faith could endure the inevitable inconsistencies of doctrine and practice, sight could not, and they nearly all shared Byam's dislike to knowing the vicar whose church they attended. Shaw was playing billiards one afternoon with a soldier, a clergyman, and their host, a Civil Servant. The church bell struck out; the clergyman dropped his cue: "I must fly; I shall be late," and long before it was possible for him to be in his place the bell

ceased. The soldier and the sailor were scandalised, the Civil Servant quite unmoved.

Although experiencing no difficulty as to outward conformity, each man held his own views. They accepted much of the practical teaching of Christianity ; they were eager to feed the hungry and clothe the naked as far as their means permitted, and not over-precise in their inquiries as to how these lamentable conditions had arisen ; and they were willing to forgive their enemies—even fairly prosperous enemies—after a reasonable interval ; but it would be difficult to name any dogma of the Church that they definitely believed or thought it necessary that anyone else should believe. On returning from evening service one of them said to his children : “ If we believe all that we say we do, we should be glad to die to-night. Do we wish to ? ”

They all professed to enjoy what they called “ a good sermon,” but as they never entered into details it was doubtful what they meant by the term. A chance gleam of light came from an unexpected quarter. A civilian walking home from church with Blissett said to him : “ That was a very good sermon. It touched them up a bit.” Blissett agreed, but a moment later changed his mind : “ D—n it, it wasn't ! If it was, we should be saying : ‘ That touched *me* up a bit.’ ”

With the exception of the very small number who were landowners, few retired naval men of



this period took any share in local government or displayed active interest in politics. Their duty to their country had been very real, but it was "done"; no further claims could be made on them. The affairs of the nation might be—and usually were—in a parlous state, but "It's *their* look-out. We've turned in."

They demanded no gratitude from their countrymen for the dangers they had faced; they usually denied that there was any risk in a life at sea apart from bad seamanship, bad navigation, bad construction, and bad discipline, and for all of these they held themselves, to say the least of it, more responsible than the great mass of excusably ignorant civilians. As to fighting, most of them had done their share; but these were ugly, mismanaged episodes, best forgotten. They asked no pity or consideration on account of the physical hardship they had endured: those they regarded as past and done with. Vaguely but insistently they claimed sympathy for wounds that had reached mind and heart, demanded intangible payment, not for what they had done, but for what they might have been.

### XIII. FAILED-CHRISTIANS

Social duties — A melancholy Christian — Failed-Christians—  
Sacrifice—Insurance—Hard lines—The point of honour—  
Homœopathy—Unrequited affection—Credulity—A compromise

“**W**E really *must* call on the Heseltines,” said Mrs. Langley. This was a social duty that sat lightly on her, and her husband felt sure that it was at least three months overdue, but as he was to share in it he tried hard for further postponement.

“I believe Heseltine’s in town.”

“Then it’s an excellent opportunity.”

“But his wife isn’t. I met her this morning. He has either been summoned to the Old Bailey with an imaginary line between him and the dock, or he’s sitting on a russia-leather chair giving evidence, at his natural pace, before a select committee of the House of Lords. I feel justified in saying that it’s one or the other, but from his wife’s account I defy anyone to say which.”

“She’s as vague as she is vacant; even her beloved patchwork has no edge to it, but I believe she’s more vague about her husband’s affairs than about anything else. I often feel sorry for the old

boy, but he would detest me more than ever if he knew it."

"Well, as he would say if anyone else were concerned: 'You *would* have it, George, you *would* have it!' I spare you his French accent—and mine."

"Just as well. It saves misunderstanding. When that young relative of Mesurier's came over from Brest, Heseltine asked him: 'How do you like the English *cousine*?' The young man looked surprised, and then said rather stiffly: 'I like her very much, thank you.' They were married a few months after."

"You laugh at our French, but I assure you I often wonder how it is that we can speak any language at all. It's marvellous. There we were, bundled off to sea at ten or twelve with less education than a modern errand-boy; we associated almost exclusively with one another, and yet we speak English quite decently. The grammar may be a bit shaky, but there is nothing wrong with accent or intonation. The few exceptions that I can remember were among those who were caught late—nineteen or twenty."

"Don't try to talk the question out. We are going this afternoon. Mrs. Heseltine will think it a compliment if we go although we know her husband is away."

"The part that really matters is what she will think of it by the time we leave. You sometimes

lead us both into benevolent enterprises beyond our moral reach. *Do* be careful what you say to the woman."

From the very beginning Heseltine's marriage had to some extent separated him from his old cronies. Shaw disliked silence, and therefore silent people; he said that they exhausted him. Moreover, he called Mrs. Heseltine lugubrious. Of this failing she was not wholly unconscious, for towards the close of the duty call, which up to that moment had prospered beyond Langley's hopes, she said with a sigh:

"I am afraid people think me a very melancholy Christian."

"*Are* you a Christian?" asked Mrs. Langley airily. "I didn't know."

"I *wish* you'd hit someone of your own size," was Langley's irritable reproof as they came away.

"I wish I had the sense to! Just because she is a pale meek woman you think she is easily persecuted and trodden down."

"You mistake me: I am not accusing you of cowardice but of foolhardiness. She has about as much brain as a jelly-fish, but she stings. You are certainly among those who go a warfare at their own cost, and without sitting down to calculate what forces the enemy can bring against you. That woman will hate you as long as she lives, and she will persuade herself that it is because you are not a Christian."



“ Well, I oughtn’t to have said it. And I don’t think I *am* a Christian. Have you ever met any ? ”

“ Any Christians ? I think not. But I have come across a few people who were fairly entitled to write Failed-Christian after their names, if they had only known it: Franks and his wife and her two old sisters, and little Nothink and Leigh, and sometimes, I think, yourself, and Byam in his latter days and Hobbes.”

“ A motley crew,” said his wife, but she was strangely touched, and hastily added: “ You have forgotten the Elliotts.”

“ No ; I don’t include them.”

“ I can’t imagine how you frame your definition if it shuts out the Elliotts and *almost* includes me.”

“ I have never arrived at a definition that satisfied myself, much less anyone else, but it would lay stress on active destruction of evil. The Elliotts are just pleasant, easy-going pagans.”

“ But surely there is such a thing as destroying evil simply by encouraging good, and so crowding it out.”

“ Certainly there is, but is that the effect that Johnny and his wife have on our characters ? I observe that after spending two or three hours with them Shaw is invariably more arbitrary and dogmatic, Heseltine more pompous and egotistical, and I myself am more cantankerous and far more of a Heady Highmind.”

"After being with them I always come home in the sweetest of tempers."

"I know you do ; but why ? "

"Don't look a gift-horse in the mouth."

"I don't want you to give me the answer, but just ask yourself *why* ? "

"You old bully ! You know perfectly well that it is because I return home convinced that it is better to be clever than good, and persuaded that I *am* clever."

"By their fruits ye shall know them ! When I came away from Franks' house I always felt that any man who took an unfair advantage of another man ought to be keelhauled."

"But you never wanted to do it."

"Except verbally. And Franks made you realise that a man who uses an unsound argument, knowing it to be unsound, or who doesn't give in as soon as he is convinced, or who pretends to be quite sure of a thing after he has begun to doubt, is just on a par with a man who makes a foul stroke at billiards, knows it's a foul stroke, and goes on with his break as if nothing had happened. Have you never seen me stop short in the middle of an argument when I seemed to be gaining the day ? "

"Often."

"That's my offering to Franks. D'you remember that High Church parson you were so gone on about twenty years ago ? He had a little heresy-and-schism shop in a back street. I went there

with you once ; it was all needlework of divers colours. I never saw anything like it outside a joss-house. He preached about offerings. I've never felt I had anything worth laying down precisely where he said it ought to be laid, but I make offerings to all my Failed-Christians, dead and living. I have a notion they are better judges of value than I am, and if there *were* anything worth having they—well, they wouldn't keep it themselves."

"Will, in the words of the hymn you 'pour contempt on all my pride.' I was perfectly foolish over that man. I believe I thought he was the only person who had the Way and the Life. I went to hear him scores of times. I remember I went once, although there was just an off-chance that your ship might be in and I hadn't seen you for six months, and yet I can't recollect a single thing he ever said except that we were to imitate Jezebel and take warning from Elijah—or was it Elisha ?"

"Rede me the riddle."

"When everything was lost she painted her face and tired her head and looked out of the window and mocked her conquerors, and when things didn't go quite well with Elijah, he went out into the wilderness, and sat under a juniper tree and prayed that he might die."

"Now I understand. But you had no special need of the doctrine; you were always awfully

plucky. I used to make that an essential when Heseltine and I talked about our wives—before we had any, I mean. Naturally we couldn't do it after."

"What kind of a wife did he wish to have?"

"Remarkably like the one he has, poor beggar, except that she was to be good-tempered and sympathetic. How she was to be sympathetic without understanding, or good-tempered without tolerance or generosity or good health, he didn't attempt to explain. We all want bricks without straw—or bricks with nothing but straw."

"Did he want quite an uneducated wife, a woman like Mrs. Byam?"

"Bless me, no! He would have been shocked at such a notion. He didn't take all learning for his province: his wife was to be allowed a sandy corner here and there, but there wasn't to be any common ground. The main point was that if a man and his wife were to be happy they must be utterly unlike. And apparently there was so much danger that they *would* be alike, that you had to be precious careful what you taught either of them! He even made up his mind that sons ought to be born first for fear that their sisters should influence them too much in childhood, but Hobbes unsettled him by asking whether it wouldn't be just as deadly if elder brothers influenced younger sisters."

"Imagine you or Dick Shaw or John Blissett



in fear that any woman should be too much like them! Men and women will always be unlike enough for all good purposes. I don't see that education makes much difference, but some degree of similarity in upbringing ought to give them a better chance of understanding one another."

"It supplies common language, a common standard of values. For want of it, when Heseltine ought to gain his point he can only do it by brutality, and when his wife ought to gain hers she can only do it by damnable iteration."

"I suppose men get the wives they deserve."

"I am hardly in a position to say so. Perhaps we get the wife that we need."

"No doubt all my enemies need discipline, but I don't like to see them get it."

"Oh, you needn't pity Heseltine too much. He has plenty of outside interests, and we never accustomed him to sympathy. Hobbes said he needed bracing treatment, and we let him have it! You never knew Hobbes. After he married I did not see much of him except on duty, and we have not met since I retired, but that summer you were out in Halifax I went three or four times to his house with Shaw. Mrs. Hobbes was rather cranky, and not many of his old shipmates got on with her. She was a little 'gone' on quacks, medical and religious. Not much mixed: as a rule she kept 'em fairly well apart. She used to remind me of the old fellow in the *Malade*

*Imaginaire* who felt seriously disturbed because his doctor had told him to walk twelve times up and down his room every morning, and he had forgotten to ask whether it was to be *en long ou en large*."

"When did you read Molière?"

"Never. Heseltine bought a faded *édition de luxe* out in St. Helena—I believe he gave three-and-sixpence for it—and for half a year he read nothing else. He used to stand at his cabin door, looking like a long thin wizard with a huge book of magic, and implore us to listen, and sometimes Shaw would say: 'Well, I don't mind if you just give me the gist of it.' And that was enough to set him going for an hour.

"I always had a great respect for Hobbes. He was an awfully zealous and hard-working fellow, clever too, but somehow he was continuously passed over. Fact is, clever men were too scarce in the navy in those days even to keep one another in countenance. No one wanted them, and they didn't always want one another. There were only three ways of getting on in the service: by interest; by fighting for your rights, which was a risky method and didn't often succeed; or by being an apparently amiable nonentity with only two ideas in your head, one of which you held on to like grim death, while you changed the other as often as necessary. The first idea was that you meant to have a soft billet, and the second was that

you must stick to Admiral A. or Commodore B. or Lord C. because he was the person most likely to help you ; but you had to be ready to pitch him overboard as soon as you found a more influential man. Your motto was, 'Turn to the rising sun.'

"At last in some very small and awkward international business Hobbes showed a great deal of sense and moral courage, and pulled the thing through and saved everyone's face, and there happened to be a minister on board, I mean a Minister of the Crown; and he was rather struck by the whole affair, and took care that all the kudos did not go to the captain, and Hobbes was made in the next batch.

"But, you see, by the time he got into the upper ranks of the service his age told against him; promotion went by seniority, and he couldn't afford to wait as long as the others did. The upshot of it all was that he never had a billet worth accepting until he was fifty-seven, but he knew he could keep it for three years, and he thought better late than never.

"The indirect expenses of taking it up were rather heavy, and it turned his thoughts to his private affairs, and he asked Shaw to draw up a new will for him. Shaw took his instructions, as solicitors say, and then began one of his depressing harangues: 'I don't want to say anything disagreeable, Hobbes; I know you have done your utmost in the matter, and many women

are left in a far worse position, but if you were to die to-morrow' (Shaw draws the line at suggesting that you may die to-night) 'this would be a mighty poor provision for a delicate woman and a girl not in the least likely to marry : mighty poor.'

"Hobbes isn't the kind of man to live to a hundred : he has far too much self-respect to do anything that would entitle people to stare at him or incite them to write familiar letters without previous acquaintance, but he is as likely to see the shaky side of eighty as any man I ever met. However, he was a good deal upset about it, and decided to insure his life, though the premiums would be very heavy. If a man owns to having been in the Tropics the doctors prod his liver as if they were poking up Welsh coal.

"Naturally the first thing the insurance people wanted to know was his precise age. Of course he was born long before the Registration Act, and he had lost his baptismal certificate, but he felt no more doubt about his age than he did about the Queen's, and told them he should be fifty-eight in the latter part of the year. When they asked for proof he produced papers showing that at a certain date the Admiralty had accepted it as a fact that he was twenty-one years of age. That wasn't enough for business purposes ; he belonged to an old-established middle-class family, and they had no difficulty in tracing him out,



and to his disgust and dismay they told him that he was within a week or two of his fifty-ninth birthday. He felt bound to inform their Lordships, and at the end of the year they superseded him. Shaw was terribly put out at the share he had had in the matter, but he saw there was nothing else to be done, though it was hard lines. At the present day men might take Hobbes' conduct as a mere matter of course: people have got used to the idea that an iron law clears them off at a hard-and-fast date. But it was a new notion in his day, and many men would have argued that, considering all the circumstances, they were justified in keeping the information to themselves. It showed that he had progressive ideas of honour. With many people honour is just an antiquated form that permits them to do things that honest men don't. He never talked about honour; he said it was a thing honest men should mention rarely, and rogues not at all. Franks was like him in that respect; he could scarcely endure to hear the word used."

"I don't think religious people ever like to hear it."

"Oh, it wasn't that exactly. I asked Hobbes once if he could see any difference between honour and honesty. He said honesty was the tree and honour the flowers: you could have the tree without the flowers, but not the flowers without the tree. I think Franks had the same thought

in his head one day when he said that the Victoria Cross was not given to a man for doing his duty, but for doing something that no one could reasonably have blamed him for *not* doing: a thing that other men would not have refused to do, but would never have thought of doing."

"How did the cranky wife like Dick Shaw?"

"You conjecture she would prefer even me to a man who cheerfully suggested that her husband might die at any moment, and that her daughter would never be married? They were most awful cronies: I never saw two people get on better. You can't imagine how funny it was to see them talking together. Shaw has hardly a spare pound of flesh even now; but he has such a powerful frame and such a well-fed voice that somehow he always reminds me of those of the Psalmist's enemies who were 'fat and well-liking,' and he is full of colour and expression and energy. Mrs. Hobbes was what our old boatswain called 'gash'ly to be'old,' and his wife went a step further and said: 'She looks as if she'd bin buried and dug hup again.' She was very tall and thin and bent, and looked like an aged priest who had been doing too much fasting; her face seemed all coast-line, and she wore dead-black hair as smooth as a reel of silk. She had a lapdog, a dingy Maltese of low intellect and too delicate to be washed, and it simply worshipped Shaw. Directly he was announced it would hurl itself recklessly

from her lap and perform a mystic dance round his boots. When he sat down I used to take pity on him—you know he loathes dogs—and pick it up gingerly with both hands and put it back on her knees. There it would sit gazing at him with its beady eyes, devouring every word he uttered, and when he left it lifted up its voice and wept.

“ They used to tell one another the most appalling yarns conceivable—I mean Shaw and Mrs. Hobbes—and the more he told her the less dismal she became. Every time he finished one of his ‘and-that-was-the-*end*-of-it’ tales, shrugging his shoulders and showing the palms of his hands, she threw her long fingers back like the old woman in the *School for Scandal* and said gloatingly, ‘De-ar me! You don’t say so,’ and the Maltese said ‘hoo-*hoo*-hoo’ more like a horse giving an ecstatic wicker than any human dog—I mean any ordinary dog. And then Hobbes would break off in the middle of whatever he was telling me and say: ‘Shaw always does my dear wife so much good. He cheers her up marvellously.’ Marvellously was the only word: I suppose it was a kind of homœopathic cure.

“ I think he only jarred on her once. She told him that although extremely subject to colds—much detail offered in proof—she had never caught one whilst attending an outdoor service. The inference she wished him to draw was plain enough

—special Providential arrangement. Shaw in his crushingly practical fashion said: ‘Indeed, Mrs. Hobbes, it would astonish me more if you told me you had never caught cold in a church. The ventilation of churches is atrociously bad: it would not be tolerated in a theatre.’”

“How strangely credulous some people are.”

“We all have our credulous point. Mine’s Jesuits. There’s nothing you could tell me about Jesuits that I shouldn’t swallow whole. Evidence? The very idea of waiting for any!”

“I think you learnt that from the Franks. Their charity stopped short of all Roman Catholics.”

“Well, if they had been perfect, why should their probation have continued? Besides, I don’t care what anyone says, there *are* popish plots!”

“Dick Shaw never allows *me* alternative pleadings. He says you can’t plead innocence and justification.”

“Hard-hearted old rascal! If he had even tweaked that dog’s ear with his gloves on I might have counted him among my Failed-Christians, but he said he couldn’t have touched the poor beast with the end of a forty-foot pole. It’s a queer thing for such a healthy man, but he’s what my dear old mother used to call ‘disgustable.’ If the value of a sacrifice depends solely on what it costs you, to have fondled that dog would have been more than looking after the



interests of six wearisome widows and their half-provided-for families."

"But my dogs always make a straight line for him although he ignores them, and if old Heseltine talks to them they look as bored as human beings."

"Shaw thinks it part of dogs' inborn depravity that they sit as close to him as possible, and if they are ordered away they resist, but the explanation is very simple. Heseltine is a sedentary man, and they know it, but they listen with all their ears open to hear Shaw make his usual suggestion before he has been five minutes in anyone's house: 'I say, let's get out of this; we're losing all the pride of the day.'"

"How could he endure life cooped up on a brig? Did he always suffer from claustrophobia?"

"More or less. Except when it was *his* ship!"

"I think he has had a hard life. Somehow he isn't made to match, and people expect too much of him. When a man as thin and dry as you are is bad-tempered, everyone calls it nerves or dyspepsia or intellect, but in *him* it's sheer villainy. I shall count him a Failed-Christian whether you do or not."

"Let's compromise: I'll put him on the waiting-list. I know very well that when you're a widow and an orphan he'll do anything on earth for you."

"Except draw fancy portraits—probably the one thing I shall be bent on doing. He would insist

on your being drawn as like ‘as thou art to thyself.’ Well within a week he would cut me short by saying: ‘My dear Mrs. Langley, surely you must remember——’”

“No, he’d say, ‘bear in mind when you are speaking to people who knew your husband.’ He’d jolly well know you hadn’t forgotten!”

## XIV. DREAMS AND PORTENTS

Elliott's revenge—Changes of the moon—Theosophy—Love and fear—The dog in possession—Dreams and premonitions—Punctuality—Malingering—Counter-irritants—A prophet's privilege

“**S**HAW is going to give Elliott his revenge,” said Langley to his wife at breakfast.  
“He has bought a house, and wants us both to run up for the day and look at it.”

“I really can't. I'm sure to say the wrong thing.”

“So 'm I.”

“But we should be more than twice as unlucky if we both went. D'you remember soon after we were married the admiral's wife asked me if I drank hot water, and I said, No, I keep that for shaving?”

“Not observing her beard?”

“I wonder I live to remember it. You were in a most awful rage with me.”

“I only said I could destroy all my chances of advancement without your assistance. And I could and did.”

“*Only!* You remind me of Kathy when she complained to me that Bob had shaken her. I

asked her what she had done to make him lose his temper, and she said : ‘ I only hit him on the head with a croquet mallet.’ ”

“ Will you go ? ”

“ No ; I’m not much wiser than I was then—except in theory. Ask old Heseltine. He thinks before he speaks. Besides, he had a house of his own once.”

“ The house is sure to be all right. I can see it in my mind’s eye. Four-square to all the winds that blow, and decent accommodation for everything but ghosts and cockroaches.”

“ You never know how mad a sailor can be until he buys a house or loses his wife.”

“ And poor old Dick—you really ought to come. You haven’t seen him since.”

“ After that as a specimen of the kind of thing I might say ? ”

“ You would remember if you saw him. He’s very much altered.”

“ He was always convinced that he would die first.”

“ Yes, I know he was. Soon after they were married—in fact it must have been during the honeymoon, for he was hustled off to China five weeks after the wedding—he told her quite seriously, as a point useful for her to bear in mind, that if she married again she had better take a soldier, as then she could have *both* pensions, whereas if she took another naval man she could



only have the more valuable of the two. Well, if you don't believe me, ask Heseltine."

"I would believe *anything* rather than look at a diagram. He drew four the other day to prove to me that it couldn't be full moon for three days in succession."

"Had you thrown any doubt on the point?"

"Not in so many words. I only said casually that I thought when there *was* a full moon it lasted ever so long."

"Phew! Lucky you didn't say it to Shaw. He's awfully touchy about the moon. Only time I ever heard him swear was one night when he drew up a blind and looked out, and someone asked, 'Are you looking for the moon?' and he shouted, 'I'm not such a d—d fool as to look for her in the wrong quarter.' It was a girl, too, but I don't think she was half as much taken aback as Byam and I were."

"Does he ever speak of his wife?"

"Never. Some people who have only known him during the last year or two asked me if he had ever been married."

"Then I simply daren't go with you."

"A few months ago I had a scare about his taking to theosophy, though he doesn't know it by name. I'm really rather glad about the house. I know there won't be anything radically wrong with it, but it is sure to bring a small train of worries, and it will fill up his time. You never

know how a man will take a thing. I thought there was nothing under the sun that David Rhys wouldn't talk about, except when he was in a sulky mood and wouldn't speak at all. His favourite daughter died suddenly while he was out in the Pacific, and he has never mentioned her name since, not even to Lucy. I wish you had known her. I never cared a rap for the rest of Lucy's children. They're so like Rhys. 'Tisn't as if they had anything to gain by it! That's what comes of mixed marriages. Well, what can you call it but a mixed marriage when people are so utterly unlike? You can strike a spark from Lucy sometimes, but it's a mere flash in the pan, and she couldn't sulk if she tried."

"There's something in your theory, Will, but though a sulky wife might be a wholesome discipline, a sulky mother would hardly answer the purpose. If she gave up mending the children's clothes and ordering their dinner for ten days at a stretch, what would become of them? And if Lucy were as fiery as her husband—well, I don't think people would be able to mention a halter in your presence."

"Evelyn was the only person who wasn't afraid of him on shore. He has been bald for years, and flies exasperate him. One day when she was quite a child he was swearing over the nuisance, and she said: 'Do let me paint a spider on your head!' He said to Lucy once: 'Perfect love

casteth out fear,' and she said: 'Then I have never loved you. I am afraid of you, and I always have been.'

"H'm. She paid off a good many old scores that day. Wouldn't any man hate to think his wife was afraid of him?"

"Men—born of women—want incompatibilities. I would often gladly have frightened you for five seconds, but I certainly should not have cared to do it for five minutes, so I refrained. In the moral sphere effects cannot be nicely calculated."

"Wasn't it Cobbett who boasted that no child had ever felt frightened in his house? Much he knew about fear if he thought it was in his power to shut it out from another soul."

"Do *you* know much about it?" asked Langley curiously.

"Don't you remember how horribly frightened I was out in Hong-Kong——"

"When you woke me up in a hurry one night, and that greased Chinaman slipped through my fingers and carried off all the money we had in the house?"

"Yes, and that winter in Schleswig, when those chattering German women persuaded me that the powder magazine was going to blow up in ten minutes and wanted me to wake the boys, and I said I preferred letting them die in their sleep"

“I don’t mean things like that: anyone can be frightened when danger is under their nose, just as the man shivered and shook when his princess-wife obligingly dashed the bucket of cold water over him one winter’s night. I mean shadowy, impalpable things. Could you sit down in your own house in broad daylight and feel desperately frightened for no reason whatever? As if there were something horrible that might at any moment be revealed? No, don’t tell me! It’s worse than theosophy. Then you won’t go?”

“No; I’ll stay by myself and learn to govern my tongue.”

“People may learn a great deal in solitude—though I don’t know what—but they most certainly don’t learn prudence. However, a single day can’t make either of us much worse. I’ll go alone if I can’t get Heseltine. He always has a host of ‘binding engagements,’ but I dare say he can fit it in somehow.”

The little expedition took place during the following week. Shaw met them at his garden gate, accompanied by a black retriever, for whose presence he seemed unwilling to account, and whose egotistical amiability he was totally unable to restrain. The house, as Langley expected, was so precisely what ‘any man with a grain of commonsense’ would wish it to be that even Heseltine’s wordiness failed him, and the inspection was brief and perfunctory, and the dog did its



best to cut the ceremony still shorter by making pointed inquiries about lunch.

As soon as the meal was over Shaw led them out on to a small common almost adjoining the garden, and asked proudly: "Who would think we were within five miles of Charing Cross? In fact we're barely outside the cab radius. If you stand just here you can't see a single house. It might be the depth of the country."

"How you'd hate it if it were! You don't care for horses, and you don't see the fun of killing things, and you don't know one crop from another till it's full-grown, and not always then. The only time I can remember your spending a month in the country you told me when you came back that all the talk about agricultural depression didn't in the least surprise you, as you had seen one farmer take three hours to pay fourteen men, while in Portsmouth you had seen five thousand paid in twenty minutes. And as to the water supply—no one would ever have imagined that you had drunk Thames water from a cask! Don't you miss the sea?"

"I never think of it, except sometimes at night when I hear the wind in the trees."

"Those poplars? Yes, they're noisy beggars. I got my landlord to have them cut down. I always hated wind. I was thankful when steam came in and we were able to give up talking about it."

“I wasn’t. I never slept better anywhere than on a stormy night in a good sailing-ship and with plenty of sea-room. I used to see everything all right aloft, and then turn in and sleep till daylight. I can’t do it now.”

“I never did it. I had no fancy for being drowned in my berth.”

“Like that poor young nephew of mine,” said Heseltine.”

“Ah, but that was in the Channel. I don’t pretend that I took things easy in crowded waters. No man who calls himself a sailor ever does. When I crossed the Channel in a packet-boat I always slept in my clothes, and put all my money in my pocket. Some months ago an old general told me that his son was going back to India after a year’s leave, and he meant to pick up his ship at Brindisi instead of starting from Southampton. The old fellow was awfully annoyed about it, called it a beastly effeminate thing to do, and thought that being a sailor I should agree with him. I said: ‘If you had seen as much as I have you wouldn’t be over and above anxious to have your son going down Channel on a foggy night. You run more risk going from the mouth of the Thames to Land’s End than you would in making the round voyage.’ A week or two later he was singing a different tune. The ship never reached Brindisi, and half the passengers and most of the crew were lost. He wrote to his son and took

back all he had said, but the young fellow wrote by the next mail and said: 'My dear Father, so far from your having any reason to reproach yourself, let me tell you that if it had not been for your most generous parting present—given in spite of our little dispute—I must have started from Southampton whether I wished to or not.'"

"It was a curious thing about my nephew's death," said Heseltine. "That night his sister—he had no mother—dreamed that he was drowned. At breakfast she said so. Twenty-four hours afterwards my brother opened the *Standard*, and the first words that met his eye were the name of his son's ship and 'Only Two Survivors.' I remember over in Ireland my mother dreamt that three men carried a coffin into her room and laid it down by my father's side. He was a comparatively young man and in sound health. The next morning he met with a trifling accident while working in the garden. Blood-poisoning set in, and in three days he was dead."

"I often dream of ghosts—often," said Langley with resolute inconsequence. "Sometimes they're black, sometimes they're white; sometimes I'm horribly frightened, and sometimes it's quite tolerable; sometimes I know who they are, and sometimes I don't. They're always determined to hem me into a corner, and I'm equally determined to walk through them. The chief likeness

between the whole crew is their most uncommon toughness."

"Dreams are unaccountable things," said Shaw. "I knew a fellow who had a brother that was giving him no end of trouble. One night his wife woke him up and said: 'What is the matter? You seemed to be having a most worrying dream.' He said: 'I dreamed George had done something—I don't know what—but the papers were full of it. The front sheet and big headlines.' He fell asleep and dreamed it again, and then a third time. At five o'clock he couldn't stand any more of it, and the papers didn't come to the house till eight, so he dressed and went down to the railway station to get the first copy that came to hand. They were putting up a placard at the bookstall: 'Attempted Assassination of the Queen.' It turned his thoughts—till he got the paper and found his brother was the man."

"Nearest approach to a true dream that I ever had was this," said Langley. "Our knife-and-boot boy is supposed to fill up his time by weeding the carriage-drive. They are both rather unnecessary, and one has to justify the existence of the other. One night I dreamed that he had been doing the work with a large carving-knife, and that he had left it out in the rain, and I found it at the left-hand side of the gate covered with rust. There was no reason at all why I should dream it; he was no worse than other boys, and the only tool



I had seen him use was a small table-knife superseded after a long and honourable career of potato peeling. The next day was rather wet, but towards noon the sun came out, and I was walking up and down the path smoking when exactly on the spot that I had dreamed of I found that young ruffian had left, not a carving-knife, but a carving-fork, and it was red with rust."

Heseltine hesitated whether to reject this contribution as a whole or in detail, and thus lost his turn.

"Dreams are things that you can hardly be expected to believe unless you dream them yourself," said Shaw with unaccustomed tolerance. "When it comes to that we're like the Jews of old; a dream makes a much deeper impression than anything we experience in actual life. I'll tell you a dream I had out in China. It had such a horrible effect on me that from the moment I knew it was true up to the present time I have never spoken of it to anyone.

"I was in the *Euterpe*. She drew very little water for her size, and we lay some miles up a river. We were waiting orders from the admiral, and lay there several weeks. Three young English merchants had a go-down a little higher up, and I became friendly with them, especially with the eldest, who was about my own age, and we often dined together. At last our orders came; disturbances had broken out, foreign-devil riots, and

we were to rejoin the admiral at once. I thought these fellows were in a position of great danger and went to the captain, and as there was just time to do it he gave me leave to go up and warn them and offer them a passage. Nothing I could say would induce them to budge; they laughed at the notion of there being any danger; they knew their men, and so forth. I felt most uneasy, but I had to hurry back to duty and leave them to take their chance.

“A few nights after I dreamed that their go-down had been attacked by a howling mob armed to the teeth, that two of the young fellows had been killed defending themselves, but the third, my special friend, had been taken alive and put to death by tortures spun out in the most fiendish way for three whole days.

“I told all my messmates what I had dreamed, and I was so awfully upset by it that they had to take it seriously and say everything they could to reassure me. The dream did not recur, and naturally in the course of a few days I began to shake off the effects. We missed the admiral, and were cruising round trying to come up with him, and it was nearly six weeks before we got any mails. The first thing I learnt when we reached Foo-Chow was that my dream was true, every iota.”

“In most of these relations one finds the words ‘just at the very time’ or ‘just before,’”

complained Langley. It would be more useful if premonitions were a reasonable time in advance."

"They are sometimes," said Heseltine, "but the result is much the same. I suppose it is because they do not come to the right people. I will tell you a strange experience that I had. A little girl of about seven was staying with my wife. She was a sensitive, nervous child, but very intelligent. My wife quite unconsciously offended her the day after she came by giving her a picture-alphabet, and she attached herself to me. One afternoon I took her into the dockyard to have a look at the ships. We went on board several. She was pleased and excited, and said very much what you would expect a clever child of that age to say. Last of all I took her to have a look at the *Captain*. I knew several of the fellows, but I did not go aboard; they were sailing the next day, and I thought they might find the child a nuisance, but we stood on the jetty, almost touching the vessel. She was holding two of my fingers, and I felt her grasp tighten. I thought perhaps she had spoken before and my wits had been wool-gathering, and I looked down at her and said: 'What is it, dear?' She was staring at the ship with her eyes quite twice their usual size, and she seemed not exactly frightened but deeply concerned. 'Oh,' she said, 'I don't like it. I don't like it at all. It's most dreadfully dangerous. Look how the water could sweep

through her !' She made a gesture with her hand, and I could see that ship heeling over as plainly as I saw her moored to the jetty. I took the child away and tried to make her forget it, but all the way home she plied me with questions as to how many men were on board, how long it took to lower life-boats, and so forth. I can tell you I thought of that child when the news came."

"That child will certainly make us lose the train, Heseltine," said Langley impatiently. "Come on !"

But during all the years of their acquaintance Heseltine had hardly ever been able to get Shaw to listen to him for two minutes at a stretch, and he could scarcely be expected to lose the opportunity given by his unusual quiescence. He turned a thin, obstinate shoulder on Langley and continued to talk.

"I had another nephew who certainly had a long enough warning. He was in the merchant service. A fine, handsome fellow with a most attractive disposition, but somehow, if you can understand what I mean, he always seemed *outside* life. One day when he was about twenty-two he went for a joke with some of his messmates to consult a wise woman. She said the usual things to them, but she told him that he would die before he was thirty. It had a disastrous effect on him for some years, and he spent every-



thing he could lay hands on. Then he saw the folly of it and pulled himself together, and was given command of a ship. She was only a cargo-boat, but brand new and a very large vessel, and well manned. I saw him just before he set off to join her, and I remember that his sister, a girl some years younger than himself and the best friend he had in the world, spoke of a recently dead acquaintance as 'poor fellow.' He turned round on her in the strangest way and said: 'Why do you call him poor fellow just because he is dead? People who are dead are a lot better off, *I* can tell you.'

"A few weeks after that his ship got into a thick fog; he lost his reckoning, and ran on a rock. It was not absolutely certain that she could not hold together, so he felt bound to stand by her. Three or four of the crew volunteered to stay with him, and the rest got safely to the shore in boats. At daybreak they found my nephew's body washed up on the beach. It was a few days before his thirtieth birthday."

"What is the house like?" asked Mrs. Langley when her husband returned tired and depressed.

"It would have stumped you to find anything to say about it. Even Heseltine's well of English undefiled ran dry in three minutes."

"How came Dick to let you lose the train? His first question always used to be, 'How did you get here?' and the next was, 'When does

your train go ?' And then he reminded you of it from time to time, and marshalled you down to spend forty minutes on a draughty platform, regarded with pity as persons who had just missed the previous train. He said to a city man once, 'I'm a very punctual person ; I'm always half an hour too soon,' and he said, 'Do you call *that* punctuality ? I should soon be ruined if I set so little value on time.' After that he did his best to cut it down to ten minutes, but it was beyond him."

"Oh, it was the dog's fault. We were on the platform about a quarter of an hour too soon, and however often we turned it *would* walk next to Shaw, and Heseltine trod on its paw. He can't have hurt it ; a puff of wind would blow him over. He never weighed much, and now if you were to put him in one scale, and his clothes and loose cash in the other, he'd kick the beam, but the brute howled most appallingly. There was Shaw down on his knees in the dust and dirt, imploring it to leave off and say where it was hurt. A knot of porters and old ladies collected round us in no time ; the porters said it had been nipped between two coal-trucks, and the old ladies ordered me 'to put the poor creature out of its pain.' I asked whether they expected me to give it the happy despatch with a blunt penknife or to strangle it with my necktie. The youngest and fiercest called me a vivisectionist, and said it would serve

me right if I died of hydrophobia. Suddenly I remembered that Shaw had apologised for the brute's manners at lunch by saying that it usually went to the station at eleven to buy itself a bun, but he had stopped its leave that morning because he didn't want its paws to be muddy when we arrived. I stooped down and said : ' Would you like a bun ? ' You should have seen the creature wink at me ! Heseltine produced a penny, and in two seconds it was bounding across the line without even a decent pretence at a limp. Unluckily the girl in the refreshment room was not the one who usually served it ; she guessed it wanted a bun and laid one down on the floor, but the brute wouldn't touch it, and stood there barking in the most reproachful manner, apparently demanding the penny back again. Shaw had to hurry round by the subway and explain that it liked having the bun in a bag just for the pleasure of taking it out again. And then the train sailed out and left us stranded for nearly two hours."

" Is it Mrs. Hobbes' Maltese ? "

" No, no ; not quite so bad as that ; in the course of nature the poor little beast must have been promoted years ago. It's that great lumbering wet-mouthed retriever of Blaques's. He died last spring, and he made Shaw promise to keep it as long as it lived. He's in for ten years of it."

" I don't remember Blaques."

" No ; I never knew much of the fellow. Besides

—but no matter. Shaw knew him out in China. At least he *wouldn't* know him, but when the usual result of all that kind of thing happened he fought tooth and nail to prove that Blaquey was temporarily insane, and got him reinstated on the lowest rate of half-pay. Soon after that he was paralysed, though he was well under forty, and Shaw used up half a ream of foolscap trying to bully the Admiralty into increasing his pension; but they adopted a serve-him-right attitude, and broadly hinted that if he couldn't live on five shillings a day he had better resign it and go to the workhouse. Then Shaw got Franks to write to old Hawtrey, and he looked up three or four fellows he had known when they were poor young nobodies, and he sunk a small sum that Blaquey hadn't had time to squander, and altogether made up a couple of hundred a year, and he used to go and see him every few months.

“The dog's a most awful nuisance. It was trained to fetch and carry for Blaquey, and wants to do exactly the same for Shaw, and if ever he tries to snub it the poor creature brings more and more things, expecting to please him. It lies in wait for the paper boy every morning, and if the postman has no letter he has to deliver a bogus one or run for his life. Shaw puts on gloves before he opens them.”

“Had you to talk dog all the time?”

“No; it ate a heavy dinner and fell asleep—



using Shaw's feet as a pillow—and then we talked ghosts and dreams."

"But doesn't theosophy generally begin with that kind of thing?"

"*Course* we oughtn't to have done it. Between the pair of us, we did Shaw a lot of harm. I wish you had been there, even if you had spent the time sparring with Heseltine. It was just his cussedness. He ran aground on the beastly things. I put a line aboard and tried to haul him off, but there he stuck. I invented awfully nice dreams on the same lines as theirs, but nothing would jerk them off the track. They listened quite gravely, and merely thought that trivial manifestations were all that could be expected in a case like mine. I wish Shaw had taken to the Lost Ten Tribes. Byam and Bewley both hammered away at it for years, and it didn't do either of 'em a scrap of harm."

"But a practical man like Dick Shaw——"

"The very person to take it badly if he gets bitten with that kind of thing. I only know one worse subject—Blissett. He could be frightened into his grave in a month. However, I can tell you one decidedly hopeful thing: the house is built on clay, and it's most perceptibly off the perpendicular already. If he has to start underpinning I shall have no fears for his sanity. An expensive counter-irritant, but effectual. Won't Elliott crow!"

“I hope he will. You’ve frightened me for *more* than five minutes.”

“Oh, what I say when I’m tired and hungry isn’t necessarily true. When’s dinner? Pity I’m not a prophet—I could exaggerate as much as I liked. Just think of Isaiah and his ‘Stars falling like leaves.’ And how can one speak of fears and shadows and mind-shivers without making too much of them? You can’t stand my French, but just put your hand on your nerves for a moment and let me tell you this: ‘La parole est un lami-noir qui allonge toujours les sentiments.’ And yet you *will* make me talk.”

“Things you prophesy don’t often happen,” said Mrs. Langley, still seeking reassurance.

“I don’t want ’em to! I may be a very minor prophet, but I’m not a Jonah. And to see how that fiendish retriever has Shaw in tow is more than enough to convince me I’m a fallible man.”

THE END



# SELECTIONS FROM MR. EDWARD ARNOLD'S LIST OF NEW AND RECENT BOOKS

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